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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:
THE SUPERINTENDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

©

BY

KENNETH W. MCMILLAN

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: THE SUPERINTENDENTS' PERSPECTIVE submitted by Kenneth Wallace McMillan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Date: November 24, 1993.

ABSTRACT

This study examined how selected superintendents of schools in the province of Alberta, Canada, experience and manage conflict. Ten superintendents of schools (7 males, 3 females) participated in the study. Information was obtained by asking an open ended question to the superintendents: "When you think of conflict and conflict management, what comes to mind?" Additional questions were posed where necessary to draw out more complete data.

Research under the interpretive umbrella of symbolic interactionism was used. Six themes emerged: The Nature of Conflict, The Emotional Element, Confident Approaches, Teamwork, Communication and Care.

The overall conclusion of the study was that superintendents employed a humanistic approach (as explained by Sergiovanni,1980) in an environment that has conflict. The majority of conflicts would be classified as veridical or contingent (Deutsch,1973), and substantive(Likert and Likert,1976). The superintendents developed their approaches through experiences, readings and conferences. They used teambuilding techniques and communication skills. Superintendents kept themselves adaptable in a culture that included managing themselves and assisting others to preserve their dignity and self worth in conflict circumstances.

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CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE AND DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to determine how selected superintendents of schools in the Province of Alberta, Canada, experience and manage conflict. An examination of how ten superintendents approached conflict situations is provided. A further purpose was to provide an increased understanding of superintendents' perceptions of conflict and their interpretation of their role in conflict circumstances. An integral task of the study was to review the literature on the topics under study to assist in the understanding and analysis of the interview data.

Research Questions

The research was guided by one major question: How do selected Alberta superintendents experience and manage conflict?

A series of sub-questions was framed to assist in addressing key issues relating to conflict and conflict management.

1. What are the superintendents' perspectives of their experiences with conflict?
2. What values do superintendents hold relating to conflict and conflict management?
3. What strategies are used in managing conflict?
4. What are the outcomes of conflict management?

Definitions

Conflict: Thomas(1976) noted that there is no consensus among researchers on a specific definition of conflict(p.890). Deutsch's(1973) definition, "a conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur" includes conflicts that originate in "one person, group or nation"(p.10). The Deutsch definition is compatible with this research.

Conflict Management: The application in a conflict situation of planned approaches designed to manifest constructive outcomes.

Superintendent: For the purpose of this study, superintendent, or chief superintendent of schools, is the chief executive officer of the school system. Two exceptions were made in the study to include two area superintendents from large urban centres. The latter superintendents were included because of the magnitude of their responsibilities which included up to 40 schools and 12,000 students, substantially greater than many of the rural and small urban school systems.

Superintendent Perspectives: The ways in which superintendents think about their work and give meaning to their actions (McKinnon, 1992).

Values: Values are defined as "an individual's ideas about what is right, good, or desirable"(Callahan, Fleenor, & Knudson, 1986, p.621).

Significance of the Study

To study conflict is to study one aspect of the complex nature of people. Understanding conflict has become increasingly more important in education. There are increased pressures on schools that, in turn, create the need for changes:

> In recent years, educators and citizens have spoken in favour of increased participation by a wider variety of groups. This is a source of stress acceleration, making the presence of conflict in schools more probable than at earlier periods of time. The pressure and successes of movements for teacher and student rights are examples of increased conflict.(Kelley,1979,p.12)

Conflict can be viewed as both positive and negative.

> Conflicts between individuals, groups, and nations are an inherent aspect of human existence. They are pervasive, and are part of the very process of interdependence that brings various actors together....Conflict as a social process, may take various forms and lead to certain outcomes. Thus conflict is neither good or bad....Conflict which is managed intelligently (i.e. proper measures are used) may lead to valued results, conflict which is managed unintelligently may lead to destructive results.(Bercovitch,1984,p.143)

There is a positive side: conflict can provide the stimulus for evaluating institutionalized procedures resulting in the creation of new and more effective ways of proceeding in an organization.

> Conflict has many positive functions. It prevents stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity, it is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at, it is the root of personal and social change. Conflict is often part of the process of testing and assessing oneself and, as such, may be highly enjoyable as one experiences the pleasure of the full and active use of one's capacities. In addition, conflict demarcates groups from one another and thus helps establish group and personal identities; external conflict often fosters internal cohesiveness.(Deutsch,1973,pp.8-9)

Conversely, there are dysfunctional aspects to conflict. Sometimes these are for the short term only. In other instances, dysfunctions last longer and end in negative situations.

> Destructive conflict is characterized by a tendency to expand and escalate. As a result, such conflict often becomes independent of its initiating causes and is likely to continue after these have become irrelevant or have been forgotten.... Communication between the conflicting parties is unreliable and impoverished.... It stimulates the view that the solution of the conflict can only be imposed by one side or the other by means of superior force, deception, or cleverness.... It leads to a suspicious, hostile attitude that increases the sensitivity to differences and threats while minimizing the awareness of similarities.(Deutsch,1973,pp.351-353)

The following description provides a pattern of conflict that often occurs:

> "Winning" the conflict becomes more important than developing a good solution to the problem at hand. The parties begin to conceal information from each other, or pass distorted information. Each group becomes more cohesive. Deviants who speak of conciliation are punished, and strict conformity is expected. Contact with the opposite party is discouraged except under formalized, restricted conditions.
>
> While the opposite party is negatively stereotyped, the image of one's own position is boosted. On each side, more aggressive persons who are skilled at engaging in conflict may emerge as leaders.(Johns,1988,p.449)

The causes of conflict are complex. On the personal side, irrational views, scarce resources, subconscious game-playing, un-met needs, differing perceptions, personal philosophies(values, beliefs, attitudes), personality differences, divergent goals, as well as current life situations all impact on the workplace. Gibson(1986) indicated that when there is a lack of fit among an individual's beliefs, values and role expectations intrapersonal conflict occurs. Interpersonal and intergroup conflict happens when there are "objective disputes, errors in understanding, semantic differences, as well as subjective and personal factors"(pp.49-50). In the last instances the more psychological factors enter into conflict. Some examples include a fight at home leading to a fight at work; transferring an authoritarian father image to the boss; or stereotyping distortions of reality if one has dealings with "blacks, women, or other disadvantaged groups"(p.50).

In school systems negative situations often include transfers, dismissals, leaves, investigations and teachers leaving the profession. In contrast, it would appear that the more ameliorative aspects of conflict management would be preferable so conflict could be managed to create positive results. Peters and Waterman(1984) provided the lessons from America's best-run companies. A set of systems, values and styles was in place that achieved extraordinary productivity through ordinary people.

> They turn the average Joe and Jane into winners. They let, even insist that people stick out. They accentuate the positive.(p.238)

Sergiovanni(1990) underlined the non-linear thinking of educational leaders. He used this analogy in reference to in-school administrators:

> Successful principals become surfers, skilled at riding the wave of the patterns as it unfolds. They respond to the value patterns when discrete goals are in conflict with each other.(p.48)

Sergiovanni was calling for a new theory of school management that both subsumes and moves beyond traditional management principles. By seeking the superintendents' interpretation of conflict in this research, an attempt has been made to come to an understanding of superintendents' explanations and approaches relating to conflict.

Method Practices

Since January 1, 1980 approximately 50 dissertation studies have related to conflict and conflict management. In that time only one dissertation study focused on the superintendents' perceptions of conflict and conflict management.

Fris(1992) reported that most studies of conflict within organizations have been set in the private sector. More research is required to determine if there is a relationship between research from non-educational studies as compared to school systems.

Loewen(1983) studied conflict using the critical incident approach. By focusing on selected examples of conflict, an analysis of strategies utilized by conflict participants was provided. Loewen interviewed Saskatchewan Superintendents(Directors of Education). Rather than replicate his study, the research of this dissertation study provided a different approach. Data from open ended questioning were analyzed. Themes were identified that provided an understanding of the superintendents' interpretation of conflict and their approaches in managing themselves in the face of conflict circumstances. The Loewen study tended to focus on the tactics involved in the management of others.

This study also provided a summary of strategies used to manage conflict. But the approach in this study also allowed an opportunity to focus on the internal perspective of the superintendent. This is a different and a broader study of conflict and conflict management.

Dowd(1991) is the only researcher who has done a comparable study to the research reported in this dissertation. That study was set in the United States. Its differs because of the geographical setting, the semi-structured interview format and the method of analysis.

Blumberg and Blumberg(1985) interviewed superintendents in New York state about the nature of the role of superintendents. They concluded that superintendents "need to continually deal with and manage conflicts of one type or another"(p.xi).

Another study by Lindle et al.(1989) examined superintendent conflict and stress in Western Pennsylvannia. Their study used a structured question format with a conceptual framework that examined the coping component of conflict.

These studies added a dimension to the overall understanding of conflict and the school superintendent.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study is as follows:

1. There is very little research at the superintendent of schools level in the area of conflict and conflict management.

2. Only one study(Dowd,1991) has been found that is similar in nature to this dissertation. It was conducted in the United States and used a different questioning and analytical approach from that reported here.

3. Theory development and conceptualization of conflict and conflict management has focused primarily on organizations other than school systems. There is a need for research on conflict and conflict management in school systems because of the high interdependence of stakeholders. (Kelley,1979)

Research Summary

Interviews with ten school superintendents were conducted and analysed in this study. Superintendents were asked one main question: "When you think of conflict and conflict management, what comes to mind?" A series of secondary questions was posed if previously structured topics (Appendix A) were not addressed. Reflective listening along with effective use of silence brought information that was later divided into a series of themes. This process is described in Chapter Three.

Organization of the Dissertation

In this chapter the study has been introduced. In Chapter Two the relevant literature pertaining to conflict and conflict management is reviewed. Two conceptual frameworks were provided. The first provided a framework for additional questions if information was not forthcoming in the beginning open ended question. The second conceptual framework proposed by Sergiovanni(1980) is provided to assist in analysis of data. Chapter three explains the research method and the pilot study. The fourth chapter provides the data from the interviews. The conclusions to the study including reflections on the conceptual frameworks are in chapter five. The final chapter is entitled "Implications for Practice."

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review was initiated in both a formal and informal way. The Eric data base was searched for literature pertaining to conflict as it interfaced with school and school system administration. Another search used University Microfilms (UMS) database of dissertations which interfaced conflict management with school administration, school superintendents, or school directors. A search for relevant books in the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Regina libraries was conducted. Inter-Library loans were utilized when appropriate. Informally, bibliographic details were sought from other researchers at the University of Alberta who were studying conflict.

As noted earlier, a series of sub-questions was provided to assist in addressing key issues relating to conflict and conflict management. These sub-questions provided a framework for both reviewing the literature and subsequently for structuring the section dealing with outcomes of the study. Under each question, below, is a series of sub-headings that address a facet of the question.

What are superintendents' perspectives of their experiences with conflict?

Conflict:

- Conflict Theory
- Conflict Models

The Superintendent and Conflict

What values do superintendents hold relating to conflict and conflict management?

Values:

Attitudes towards Peace and Conflict.

Values and Conflict

What strategies are used in managing conflict?

Conflict Management:

Approaches to Conflict Management

Superintendent Strategies and Conflict

Personality Styles and Conflict

Thinking and Conflict

What are the outcomes of conflict management?

Results of Conflict Management

Conceptual Frameworks

Conceptual Framework through Questioning Technique

Conceptual Framework for Decision Alternatives

Conflict:

Introduction: What are superintendents' perspectives of their experiences with conflict? This question could be restated as, "what are superintendents' thought patterns that give meaning to their observations or participation in conflict?" In a global sense that is the essence of the literature review and study. More specifically, this section reviews conflict theories and conflict models and then places conflict into the context of the superintendency.

Conflict Theories: Deutsch(1973) reported there is no one theory of the causes of conflict. There are a number of schools of thought attempting to explain conflict: psychoanalytic, learning, consistency, and role.

Psychoanalytic Theorists: Maslow(1968) stated that people are their "own project" and thus "make themselves." The more optimal a person's development, the more prone they are to "love, courage, creativeness, kindness, and altruism"(p.193). Maslow(1968) along with Rogers(1951), referred to this development as self-actualization. The more self actualized the person, "the more capable one is to realize true potentialities and function in a more creative manner" (Fitts, 1971, p.3).

Conflict, tension and stress can occur when there is incongruity between one's conception of self (self concept) and reality. This in turn lowers self esteem. Rogers(1951), who is often referred to as the "father of counselling" has discovered that the disparity between the "self" and "experience" can lead to "the breakdown of defences, the extreme arousal of anxiety, and a disorganization of the self-structure"(p.513). Thus, the lower one's self esteem, the more difficulty there is in mustering the necessary forgiveness and altruism necessary to overcome conflict circumstances.

Psychoanalytic theorists refer to self esteem as ego strength. Erik

Erikson(in Deutsch,1973,p.45) indicated the following are the ingredients of a strong ego: hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom. Deutsch examined the conditions necessary for the development of ego strength:

> Ego strength develops from experiences of a moderately high degree of success in coping with a moderately difficult and demanding environment. In other words, an individual needs the experience of coping successfully with external conflict, but he also needs the experience of coping successfully with failure.(p.45)

Deutsch provided some of the reasons for weak ego strength:

> Conditions include: a social environment that lack the virtues Erikson has described; massive exposure to failure and derogation; overprotection and lack of exposure to conflict and difficulty; loss of status; a prolonged experience of internal conflict; a prolonged experience of powerlessness and helplessness; isolation and lack of contact with social reality; fatigue, intoxication, and illness.(p.45)

Deutsch concluded his discussion on ego strength:

> Ego weakness, for any of these reasons, is likely to stimulate a competitive process of conflict resolution, self-deception, and the conditions that perpetuate the conflict.(p.45)

According to Ellis(1973) people filter their communication through both irrational and rational beliefs before they act. The beliefs, whether rational or irrational, could be the seeds of conflict. This could be why one person might become quite upset while another person hardly reacts at all in the same situation. Thus understanding the human perspective and assisting others to maintain a healthy view of their lives may be the necessary prerequisites for any interventions relating to conflict and conflict management.

Learning Theorists: Connectionist theorists place emphasis on stimulus-response, ambivalent tendencies and reinforcement. Another group, cognitive theorists, refer to,

> three fundamental conflict situations: an approach-approach conflict in which an individual is torn between two desires; an avoidance-avoidance conflict, in which the individual is caught between two fears; and an approach-avoidance conflict in which the individual fears to approach something he desires.... As the strength of each competing response tendency increases, it seems evident that conflict will be more intense and more difficult to resolve.(Deutsch,1973,pp.34,35)

Learning theorists have recognized, according to Deutsch, that competing response tendencies may not account for all the drives associated with conflict, but they have left this research to consistency theorists.

Consistency Theorists: Consistency theorists have as a basic tenant of their theory that it is "noxious to have inner conflict" and that people will seek to eliminate it if it is uncomfortable. In this pressure to have consistency, "in its extreme form it manifests itself in intolerance for ambiguity, an oversimplified black-white view of the world, and an inclination toward rigid, dogmatic positions."(p.38)

> An interesting implication of this view is that people will not only attempt to act in a way that is consistent with their beliefs, but also, conversely, they will attempt to make their beliefs consistent with their actions.... The consistency theorists... suggest a person who has chosen a course of action and feels responsible for it will become even more committed to it if he experiences unexpected difficulty, pain, or loss as a consequence of his choice.(p.37)

Role Theorists: Another group of researchers, role theorists, tend to focus on the socialization, or lack thereof, for individuals who engage in deviant behaviours. As well,

> Although an individual may be both adequately and appropriately socialized, he may nevertheless find himself confronted with conflicting expectations or expectations that exceed his ability, and, as a consequence, he may experience inner conflict and exhibit deviant behaviour.... The unique insights offered by role theorists in their discussions of conflict follow from their recognition that internal conflict, and the resulting deviance, is often a reflection of external conflict or of a malintegration of the social system.(pp.39-40)

Thus Deutsch recognized the unique contributions of learning, consistency, role and psychoanalytic theorists to the understanding of conflict.

Classification Systems: In terms of conflict, in general, Deutsch provided six different types of conflict: Veridical conflict (accurately perceived but difficult to resolve); Contingent conflict (easy to resolve but not recognized by parties); Displaced conflict (parties arguing about the wrong thing); Misattributed conflict (conflict between the wrong parties usually over the wrong issues); Latent conflict (a conflict that should be occurring but it is not -- needs consciousness raising); and, False conflict (the occurrence of conflict with no objective basis for it) (pp.12-15).

Another way of classifying conflict is in level of intensity or severity. At the low end, according to Bailey(Lindelow,1981,p.278) is a low level of human contentiousness. The second level of conflict involves issues such as programming and budget. The third level would border on being "revolutionary." One meets this in schools with militant race problems, and striking teachers(p.278).

Likert and Likert(1976) differentiated between substantive conflict (task oriented conflicts) and affective conflict (interpersonal conflicts). Another classification system was also proposed by Coser(1956): realistic and non-realistic. Realistic conflicts have the frustration aimed directly at the source whereas non-realistic referred to conflicts in people who needed to release tension.

Summary: This section demonstrated that there have been attempts at producing conflict theory. In particular, Deutsch(1973) explained four theoretical positions: psychoanalytic, learning, consistency and role. Just as there has been no agreement on a definition of conflict(See definitions, chapter one), there is also no umbrella theory that encompasses the theories presented. Three methods of classifying conflict were also reviewed.

Conflict Models: Thomas(1976) in reviewing conflict literature, suggested that there are two models of conflict. One is a process model that describes the events of a conflict episode. The other is the structural model of underlying conditions and explains how those conditions influence conflict behaviour. Callahan et al(1992) identified a third model, organizational conflict. A fourth model in the literature was Janis & Mann's decision making model (Hoy and Miskel, 1987).

Process Model: Pondy's process model "focuses upon the sequence of events which transpire within a conflict episode." (Thomas,1976,p.926) Each category leads to the next. For example, the aftermath of a previous conflict situation may lead to the next series of conflicts. Latent conflict refers to underlying conditions such as scarce resources or power issues. When people consciously become aware of the latent conditions they perceive that there is a conflict. At this stage the conflict might not be worth bothering about, it may be suppressed, or it may shift to the more affective level of frustration or hostility. Hostility may manifest itself in either low key behaviours or overt hostility. Usually there are interventions at this stage and the conflict may evolve to an aftermath stage of people working co-operatively. However there usually are outstanding issues that become the issues for the cycle repeating itself. If the issues were not dealt with adequately by all parties, then conflict can also expand at this stage to involve other parties or issues (Callahan et al.,1986,pp.283-285).

Pruitt and Rubin(1986) provided a similar model to Pondy's. They likened conflict as being like a three act play: Act I, escalation; Act II, stalemate; and Act III, settlement. The third stage could also be called de-escalation. According to these authors, there has been very little research on de-escalation because it is the escalation that draws attention to conflict as a researchable social problem(p.183).

Garmen(1982) provided an adaption of Pondy's model as it relates to schools and school systems and labelled it "The Conflict Cycle."

Calm: The status quo, acceptance of staff, board and administrative processes.

Challenge: Someone challenges. Demands are made. Little attention might be paid at this time.

Escalation: More individuals and groups get involved. Factions and splits occur. Avoidance can no longer be used.

Crisis: The staff, the principal, the superintendent, and/or perhaps the board realize action needs to be taken.

Confrontation: There is the realization that some of the challenger's demands might deserve further attention. The parties sort out which demands will be given attention.

Communication: Issues are clarified and give and take begins.

Compromise: Agreement is reached on basic issues resulting in gains and losses on both sides.

Change: Agreement begins to be carried out. Procedures are revised. Performance is monitored.

The cycle returns directly to "Calm."

Structural Model: The structural model "focuses upon the conditions which shape conflict behaviour in a relationship" (Thomas,1976,p.927). Behavioural predispositions from self and others along with social pressures influences people's behaviour. If stakes are high, heavy competition (a form of conflict) might emerge. Alternatively, high levels of collaboration could occur. Rules and procedures could also have an impact on the situation.

Thomas(1976), in reference to the process and structural models, indicated that both models are complementary. "Both models are necessary for effective conflict management"(p.894). The process model is helpful for the short term, while the structural model assists in long range management.

Organizational Conflict: Callahan(1986) provided a description of the Robbins' Organizational conflict model. Conflict emanates from three sources: communication, structure and personal-behavioral factors. Communication difficulties often happen because "the message understood may be entirely different from the message intended." Structurally, bureaucracy can lead to high levels of frustration. In contrast, people who have independent tasks to do can have frustration because of poor communication or cooperation. Personal-behavioral factors include "personality, role satisfaction, status, and goals" (pp.286-287).

Decision-Making Model: Another model, which is more of a decision-making model was proposed by Janis & Mann(in Hoy & Miskel,1985, pp.322-324). This conflict model has a series of steps the administrator uses in deciding on a course of action: 1) Are the risks serious if I don't change? (If they are not serious, then status quo is maintained.); 2) Are the risks serious if I do change? (unconflicted change can go ahead with minimal stress.); 3) Anxiety produces the next question: Is it realistic to hope to find a better solution? (if the answer is no, then avoidance may be the only approach to take); and 4) Is there sufficient time to find a better solution? (If there isn't, then panic produces a hastily arrived at solution -- in a state of "hypervigilance.")

The Superintendent and Conflict: Boich, Farquhar, and Leithwood(1989) indicated that increased expectations for the superintendents and boards will continue as school systems meet the needs of our evolving society. Changing demands because of increased cultural diversity and equal rights legislation, as well as pressure from an aging population to keep school system costs down all contribute to these expectations. "This will place considerable pressure on the superintendent's ability to find common ground, define the boundaries of the system's responsibility, and help staff to acquire these same abilities"(p.170).

Sergiovanni(1991) provided this observation of the superintendency:

> The work of administrators was characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation and that the majority of administrative activities were of brief duration, often taking only minutes. Activities were not only varied but also patternless, disconnected, and interspersed with trivia; as a result the administrator often shifted moods and intellectual frames.(p.21)

Superintendents are faced with interpersonal and organizational pressure which is sometimes beyond their control. Konnert and Augenstein(1990) commented on their perceptions of the superintendent:

> Conflict resolution and motivation are difficult under the best circumstances. In a collective bargaining environment, they become even more difficult. Sometimes board members have difficulty in understanding that the superintendent does not directly control a number of activities within the system. At times, the superintendent may be asked to deliver more than s/he can deliver.(p.122)

Wirt(1990), in an American study, found that the superintendents and

Boards of Education are being squeezed by demands that create organizational and decision making overload: (a) minorities, over equal educational opportunity; (b) parents, over accountability; (c) taxpayers, over financial costs and equity; (d) teachers, over collective bargaining; (e) students, over civil rights; and (f) state and federal governments over mandates(p.8).

Through these pressures "the realization [has come] that conflict over educational policy is not only much like that over other policies, but it is normal, indeed, [a] desirable condition of a free society"(p.22). However, by concentrating on these value-laden issues, Wirt concluded that most superintendents lack the time and perhaps the inclination to provide instructional leadership especially if they have to fight their way through the day (pp.74-75).

The dynamics within the community have an impact on the leadership style the superintendent can utilize:

> The degree of community conflict also affected superintendent behaviour. When it was high, the superintendent could act as assertive, presiding, or compromising role. When it was low, one could act as a professional, delegator, or facilitator. Amid conflict the superintendent seeks system maintenance as well as personal survival.(p.2)

According to Wirt,

> Superintendents do not manage these new and more demanding tasks very well. The data on increased early retirement, decreased job tenure, serious health problems, or impact on their marriages tell us that the demands exceed the capacities of many professionals. Of course, this does not

> apply to those who manage it well, who stay on, or who find the work keenly exciting. But as a whole this is not a happy group, although some individuals are.(pp.57-58)

Blumberg and Blumberg(1985) likewise reported on the stressful elements of the superintendency. Following interviewing twenty-five superintendents in New York State on the nature of the role, they concluded that "the people who hold this office seem to becoming increasingly aware of the emotional costs involved." In reference to superintendents who have suffered strokes and heart attacks, one of the interviewees said "When you see these things happening to your colleagues and friends, you begin to wonder whether it's all worthwhile."(p.155).

Values

Attitudes toward Peace and Conflict: Legge(1993) reported on the views of Terry Waite, a hostage for five years in the Middle East. According to Waite, conflict is "an essential part of the human experience.... It's when it becomes destructive it has to be dealt with." But in dealing with it he had these suggestions: "I would bring a bit more brain, a bit more compassion, a bit less brawn...to approach the problems." We must learn "how to harmonize the opposites." In so doing, according to Waite, we have to harmonize our own internal conflicts. This is why Waite is working now on the Irish-British dispute in an effort to bring harmony at home(p.9).

Deutsch(1973) noted the higher priority of waging conflicts in contrast to achieving peace:

> The application of full cognitive resources to the discovery and invention of constructive solutions to conflict is relatively rare. Many more resources are available for the waging of conflict.... This is obviously true at the national level where military expenditures dominate the national budget.(p.362)

The preamble to the UNESCO charter recognizes:

> Since wars begin in the minds of human beings, it is the minds of human beings that the foundations of peace must be constructed.(Tinker,1991,p.4)

Tinker(1991) reviewed attitude formation, particularly relating to peace research. Through thousands of studies reviewed, he found among other things that American children find peace boring while war is seen as "action, thrilling, and imaginative"(p.53). He also found that if peacemakers are to have any impact, "they need to have good self images, including knowing themselves and liking what they do" (p.51). Reinforcement activities for converts to peace were seen as important (pp.48-53). But probably most significant as it relates to this study:

> Attitudes can be and indeed are changed. Such changes can come from communications and various stimuli outside or external to the individual and/or group. Evidence ... indicates that attitudes tend to stay changed more when factors leading to change are generated within individuals or groups rather than from outside.(pp.48-49)

As was indicated in Tinker's attitude formation review, a person's self concept (i.e, good self images) and their level of self esteem appears to have an impact on their ability to withstand potential conflict situations.

In attempting to explain conflict, Geleman(in Evans,1991) said that "nothing promotes the cohesion of social, ethnic, or national groups as surely as the common object of loathing." This "we-they" attitude is associated with the feelings of conflict -- "anger, powerlessness, low self esteem, victimization [that] drive us deeper into ourselves, paralyse, or cause us to strike back only to perpetuate conflict"(p.20A).

Coser(1956) extended the causes of dysfunctional conflict, by including insufficient toleration.

> The intensity of a conflict which threatens to "tear apart" which attacks the consensual basis of a social system is related to the rigidity of the structures. What threatens the equilibrium of such a structure is not conflict as such, but the rigidity itself which permits hostilities to accumulate and to be channelled along one major line of cleavage.(p.157)

Brown(1991) applauded researchers who have studied the solutions to conflicts by non violent and peaceful means. Studies of conflict, like the work of the legal system and courts appears to focus on the past. The study of conflict has tended to review what caused the conflict, or the history of the events that caused conflict. On the other hand, the study of harmony and preventative approaches for peace tend to be approaches that are future oriented.

> We need to know and understand as much about the cause for harmony -- the causes for genuine peace -- as we ought to know about the causes for disharmony.... Would that someday the study of the causes for harmony among nations and peoples of the world will be as dominant a basic research project as the causes for war. Would that Pacem in Terris will become a reality.(p.3)

Values and Conflict: Values are defined as "an individual's ideas about what is right, good, or desirable" (Callahan,Fleenor,& Knudson,1986, p.621). If a party claims that their value perspective is superior to another's then there is a greater likelihood of conflict than if no claim of superiority is made (Deutsch,1973,p.16). In terms of values in handling or engaging in conflict: "how hard one fights depends on how much a value is threatened" (Wirt, 1990, p.24). Rokeach(1968) suggested that the more central a belief, the more likely there will be widespread repercussions if the belief is changed, especially if it is a central belief.

Fairholm(1991) addressed the relationship of values to conflict resolution:

> Values are not rules of conduct. They are basic constructs more than rules. They determine rules and rank rules of conduct. They are criteria for selecting actions, goals, and methods. Values are learned. Some values are explicit, others are not. They nonetheless trigger some specific behaviour and constrain behaviour that contravenes the values. Often institutional values are codified in mission and vision statements. They provide frameworks for transmitting and implementing specific behaviour toward specific goals and results. They are powerful in shaping group member behaviour and validating institutional policy and mission. They determine acceptable actions, resolve conflicts, determine sanctions employed, and are integral to reward systems. (p.66)

If values are threatened by forces either within or outside a school system, then superintendents can use varying approaches. For example, Wirt found that at times of substantial community conflict "one can either mobilize the public in support of one's direction -- and win -- or else go down fighting..."(p.24). But he also found that some administrators are adept at side stepping conflict caused by "value" situations by shifting the decision making to their boards and/or to their state legislators. Committees, studies, and commissions are also ways of deflecting intense value issues.

Conflict Management

Approaches to Conflict Management: Irrational views, subconscious game-playing, un-met needs, differing perceptions, personal philosophies, personality differences, and divergent goals have been cited as some of the reasons for conflict. Because of the numerous causes of conflict, the approaches one takes in adapting to conflict circumstances are varied. Lindelow(1981) gave this practical advice in the art of conflict management:

> The administrator should be "harshly realistic" about his or her limitations in managing conflict. There are times in the year, in a career, in a life when cyclonic winds and waves will roll over everything in sight and when the skill of the ablest mariner is probably less effective than his praying knees -- if for no other reason than that he has thereby lowered the ship's centre of gravity(p.292).

Follett(1941) studied conflict in business. She integrated psychological concepts with the dynamics of the work place. In so doing she recognized that in understanding conflict, it is desirable to:

> Think of conflict as neither good nor bad; to consider it without ethical prejudgment; to think of it not as warfare, but as the appearance of difference, difference of opinion, of interests. For that is what conflict means -- differences. (p.30)

She suggested that there are three ways of handling conflict:

domination, compromise and integration. Domination, although the easiest, is usually unsuccessful because one side loses. Compromise, the more typical approach found in collective bargaining, for example, has both sides giving in, thus often maintaining some lingering dissatisfaction. Integration seeks, in a creative or inventive way, to find solutions that allow each party to achieve its ends(p.31). In this way "cards are placed on the table" and the real issues are faced, bringing everything into the open. Constituent parts are examined, as well as the language (or symbols) that are the essence of the conflict. At this stage "brilliant inventiveness" takes over, usually by a third party, to bring about a satisfying solution to both sides (pp.38-49).

Another writer, Thomas(1976) described five ways on a competitive to cooperative continuum, how leaders might manage conflict: forcing, compromising, accommodating, collaborating, and avoiding. In an instance when quick, unilateral decisions are required a forcing approach might be used. Since this could cause resentments, the relationship between the "forcer" and the "forced" cannot be critical. Otherwise, a person might not relate well to the forcing party in the future. Compromising, is less of a win-lose strategy when compared to forcing. However neither side really wins as they both give up something. If two parties are of equal power, and a quick settlement is required, this method may work. Accommodating is cooperative, but very non-assertive. It works when you are wrong or when there is a definite power imbalance between two persons. On the other hand, when all parties wish to achieve openness and respect, then a collaborative approach brings the best results. The fifth Thomas conflict management strategy, avoiding, leaves the conflict unattended. This will work for trivial matters or when you are in a low power situation. Burke(1970) in studying these various conflict management approaches, found that subordinates perceived conflict to be handled most constructively when they perceived supervisors as adopting accommodative or collaborative tactics, and least constructively when supervisors adopted competitive or avoidance tactics (Thomas,1976,p.909).

While all people in executive positions can expect to be under stress, Blumberg and Blumberg(1985) concluded that there are additional conflict factors in the superintendency as compared to the corporate executive:

> They include such things as the public perception of the superintendent as the guardian of a sacred public enterprise, the education of the community's children; the politicalness of the relationship between the superintendent and the school board; the fact that superintendents once held the same job -- that of a teacher -- as the people over whom they are now expected to exercise authority; the huge number of community and governmental groups with one or another stake in the schools; the superintendent's visibility and accessibility as public property.(p.188)

Schools and school systems can expect to see conflict, according to Kelley(1979) because they have so much interdependence amongst the people that are a part of them. Johns(1988) provided an explanation of conflict because of interdependence:

> First it necessitates interaction between the parties so

> they can co-ordinate their efforts... interdependence implies that each party has some power over the other. It is relatively easy for one side or the other to abuse its power and create antagonism.
>
> It must be emphasized that interdependence does not alone lead to conflict. In fact, it often provides a good basis for collaboration through mutual assistance. Whether or not interdependence prompts conflict depends on the presence of other conditions.(p.446)

Pondy(1967) suggested ways the pressure from this interdependence can be reduced:

> Functional interdependence is reduced by
> (1) reducing dependence on common resources;
> (2) loosening up schedules or introducing buffers such as inventories or contingency funds; and
> (3) reducing pressures for consensus....
> If the parties to the conflict are flexible in their demands and desires the conflict is likely to be perceived only as a transient disturbance.(p.318)

Competitive Approaches: Bercovitch(1984) outlined the power approach to conflict management which often uses a win-lose approach in the context of judicial or political power:

> [Strategies] include the development of a competitive orientation, an increase in assertive behaviour and a decrease in communication. Distinctions between the parties become pronounced and negative stereotypes become prominent. Other effects of using win-lose strategies include pursuing one's own goals, personalizing a conflict, using threats, emphasizing disagreements, and generally attempting to exploit the other.(pp.144-145)

Thomas(1974) referred to this power approach as competitive tactics. Quoting French and Raven(1959), Thomas listed "six such bases of power: information power, referent power, legitimate power, expert power, coercive power, and reward power." Information power is used to convince others that your position is preferable, even if the information is selective or misrepresentative. Referent power uses appeal and attraction(charisma). Legitimate power uses rules and regulation to "pull rank." Expert power uses superior knowledge. Coercive power uses threats like strikes and lockouts. Reward power involves rewards such as promotions to gain compliance. (p.903)

These bargaining tactics are all part of the competitive stance to get another person or group on the other's side. This use of power could be classified as "coercive, manipulative, and domineering behaviour and it invites passivity, rebellion and malicious compliance" (Labella & Leach,1985,p.18). It is quite different to the collaborative approaches used in a more co-operative environment.

Co-operative Approaches: This more satisfactory approach to conflict management, the collaborative approach, uses the win-win strategy. Here mutual problem solving is used to "enhance creativity, realize the constructive potential of a conflict, promote understanding, and increase co-operation."(p.145)

Superintendent Strategies and Conflict: From the professional side, McKinnon(1992) in analyzing the human perspective for educational reform referred to "deteriorating conditions of teaching, resulting from an overload of routine responsibilities and a lack of opportunities to have a significant impact on change."(p.17) He quoted Wolff(1988):

> Educational leaders' requests for change need to be accompanied by concrete promises of empowerment, greater freedom to choose textbooks, places on curriculum writing teams, mentorship of younger colleagues, and release time to attend seminars. Principals need to encourage teachers to be initiators.(p.121)

Corwin(1969) studied another dimension of conflict in schools. He found teachers who were involved in decision making about their classrooms actually had an increase in the number of minor inter-staff conflicts, but had a sizeable decrease in the number of major disputes.

> The authority to make routine decisions permits more opportunity for the expression of existing disputes and provides more occasions for disputes to arise; however, this opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, by providing occasions for expressing minor forms of conflict, might prevent minor irritations from developing into major incidents.(p.515)

Thus shared decision making appears to keep conflict at a low ebb. When conflicts do become major there are serious implications for school systems. Appendix G provides a number of conflict management techniques used by teachers and teacher organizations to assist in handling these disputes. Some of these techniques are also used by teachers engaged in conflict with students, community or other staff members in order to maintain professional respectability.

While the Thomas typology, or the Follett methods examined conflict management strategies across various organizations, Fris(1991) identified strategies used by principals of schools. In interviewing principals in both Canada and New Zealand, he found the following methods were used: manage information, develop allies, rely on norms, be assertive, protect personal interests, and use time strategically (p.16).

Loewen(1983), in researching the conflict management tactics used by directors of education (superintendents) in Saskatchewan, discovered the predominant methods used were information control, coalition formation, rules and regulations, information channels, denigration, and stalling for time. Superintendents were ill-equipped to use win-win strategies to resolve conflicts.

Dowd(1991) using qualitative research methodology discovered that people issues were more prevalent than issues such as money. Conflicts with boards of education especially undiscussible topics were mentioned most frequently. Conflicts with employees were second. Using Deutsch's classifications(1973) he found veridical (accurately perceived but difficult to resolve) or contingent (easy to resolve but not recognized by the parties) issues were of major difficulty to the superintendents.

Lindle et al.(1989) used a structured interview approach in interviewing superintendents in Western Pennsylvania on how they coped with conflict. He concluded that "conflict management and human relations skills are keys to success in dealing with competing demands on the job and developing coping mechanisms which reduce stress."(p.49) He found that one of the predominant stressors in conflict for the superintendents was relationships with the school boards. Persistence in dealing with people in conflict was an identified personal quality mentioned by more than half of the superintendents interviewed.

Personality Styles and Conflict: An approach used in some university classes and workshops assists people to better understand themselves. It involves understanding predominant personality styles of self and others. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator provides a psychological self-portrait to help people overcome weaknesses and understand others better (Hirsh & Kummerow,1989). Piskel (1992) illustrated how some personality types can contribute to conflict. For example, a person who is predominantly a "dictator", who just wants to get things done, has little patience with a person who analyses every step in an attempt to get things perfect. Likewise people whose styles are predominantly "dictatorial" or "analytical" would have little toleration for an individual who is primarily an "entertainer", and visa-versa. There is also a fourth type -- a courteous, affectionate "relater." The "analyst" and "ruler", in the extremes, are task oriented. On the other hand the "entertainer" and "relater" have a strong people focus. While most would have some portions of each of these styles in their personalities, people who are in the extreme of any of these types can be "difficult people." Daresh(1988) classified these types as the controller (extroverted and task-oriented); analyzer (introverted,painstaking deliberators); supporter (introverted, people-oriented); and promoter(extroverted, get things happening) (p.35). "An organization functions best when it capitalizes on the strengths of each individual and encourages the positive use of their differences."(p.34) He concluded:

> It is important to understand that no one style is intrinsically better than others. None of these four is either "right" or "wrong." Individuals... have strengths and weaknesses that may be called upon to create more effective organizational outcomes.(p.35)

Thomas(1976) provided a review from the literature on the effect of certain personal dispositions on conflict situations. Citing Follett(1941) he reported that "problem solving is easier for creative people and people who deal cognitively with complex issues." On the other hand if persons have high affiliation needs, they may tend to consider other's feelings and be more accommodating. Task-oriented people may tend to "be more interested in confronting and solving problems." Thomas also reported that personality variables became less significant in heavy competition or if there was an anticipated threat to the individual(p.913).

Terhune(in Deutsch,1973) added credence to certain personalities being more congenial while others are more competitive.

> Such personality characteristics as aggressiveness, authoritarianism, need for dominance, suspiciousness, dogmatism, tendency to derogate others, exploitiveness, and Machiavellianism tend to produce costly conflict and that cooperation is more likely to result from personalities that are egalitarian, trusting, open-minded, tolerant of ambiguity, high in need for achievement, favourable in their view of human nature. In other words, a bossy person or a suspicious person

> is likely to rub more people the wrong way and apt to have a narrower range of cooperative relations than a person who is egalitarian or trusting.(p.375)

Thinking and Conflict: Another strategy for handling conflict situations is to change the ways that we think about conflict which in turn changes the way we manage it. De Bono(1990) suggested we have neglected the "generative, productive, constructive, creative, and design aspects of thinking"(p.273). In relation to conflict, we can depart from "black and white"; "right and wrong"; or "we and they" thinking into a much more creative mode. Problem solving, has tended to come back to what we already know. Creative problem solving brings us into new perceptions -- new and uncharted directions. He concluded:

> I would be very happy indeed if we did acknowledge that perception was a very important part of thinking. Once we do this we soon find that the table-top logic habits of our traditional thinking system do not readily apply and that we must develop a better understanding of perception and deliberate perceptual skills.(pp.288-289)

DeBono used an analogy to illustrate. In solving conflict we have tended to use "rock logic."

> A rock is solid, permanent and hard. This suggests the absoluteness of traditional thinking(solid as a rock).... A rock has hard edges and a definite shape. This suggests the defined categories of traditional thinking. We judge whether something fits that category shape or not.... In traditional (rock) logic we have judgement based upon right/wrong.... In a conflict situation both sides are arguing that they are right.... Traditional thinking would seek to discover which party was really "right."(pp.290-291)

On the other hand, "water logic" is the proposed direction of creatively approaching conflict situations.

> Water is just as real as rock but it is not solid or hard. The permanence of water is not defined by its shape.... Water has a boundary and an edge which is just as definite as the edge of a rock, but the boundary will vary according to the terrain.... If you add more water, the new water becomes part of the whole.... Water flows according to the gradient. Instead of the word "is" we use the word "to." Water flows "to" somewhere.... Water logic would acknowledge that both parties are right but that each conclusion was based on a particular aspect of the situation, particular circumstances and a particular point of view.(pp.290-291)

He concluded:

> If you have a piece of rock in a glass and you tilt the glass the rock is either in the glass or falls right out. There is an "all or none" effect. That is not so with water. You may pour some water from the glass but still retain some water in it.(p.292)

Collaboration, integration, and principled negotiation to a certain extent use creative approaches. Although no reference was made in the writings of Thomas(1976), Follett(1941) or Fisher and Ury(1983) to water logic, the flow of their approaches would be compatible with this analogy.

Creative thought processes are addressed by Deutsch(1973): "My own predilections have led me to the hunch that the major features of productive conflict resolution would be similar, at the social level, to the processes involved in creative thinking"(p.361) He provided a sequence of events that lead to creative conflict processes:

> 1. an initial period that leads to the experiencing and recognition of a problem that is sufficiently arousing to motivate efforts to solve it;
> 2. a period of concentrated effort to solve the problem through routine, readily available or habitual actions;

> 3. an experience of frustration, tension, and discomfort that follows the failure of customary processes to solve the problem and leads to a temporary withdrawal from the problem;
> 4. the perception of the problem from a different perspective and its reformation in a way that permits new orientations to a solution to emerge;
> 5. the appearance of a tentative solution in a moment of insight, often accompanied by a sense of exhilaration;
> 6. the elaboration of the solution and the testing of it against reality; and finally,
> 7. The communication of the solution to relevant audiences.(p.360)

According to Deutsch:

> There are three key psychological elements in the process:
> 1) the arousal of an appropriate level of motivation to solve the problem;
> 2) the development of the conditions that permit the reformulation of the problem once the impasse has been reached; and
> 3) the concurrent availability of diverse ideas that can be flexibly combined into novel and varied patterns.
>
> Each of these key elements is subject to influence from social conditions and the personalities of the problem solvers.(p.360)

In a non threatening environment individuals are "alert" but relaxed in creative problem solving. Excessive tension leads to a closed rather than the needed open mind. (Deutsch,1973,p.361)

Our mind uses language and as such, Sergiovanni(1991), raised the issues relating to the use of language. Management literature is devoid of much discussion or research in the area. He suggested that the categories that we create empowers others to think like the person who created the categories. This affects creative thought processes.

For example, superintendents who use the language of

> instructional delivery systems in their protocols for evaluating principals force principals to have to defend themselves in those terms no matter how effective they might be otherwise.(p.66)

Like De Bono he questioned the use of metaphors like "running a railroad" as that comes from the industrial "management" age. Akin to water logic, he suggested:

> In nonlinear and loosely structured situations it makes more sense to think amoeba instead of railroad. Thinking amoeba is a rational approach to understand the nature of administrative work. Running a school is like trying to get a giant amoeba to move from one side of the street to the other. As the glob slips off the curb onto the street and begins its meandering journey, the job of the principal is to figure out how to keep it together while trying to keep it moving in the general direction of the other side.... Throughout, the principal is never quite sure where the glob will wind up but never loses sight of the overall goal of getting it to the other side. Mind, heart and hand become one as the principal "plays" the glob, relying on her or his feeling for globbiness and ability to discern and anticipate patterns of movement that emerge.(p.67)

De Bono(1991) extended beyond these metaphors as he addressed conflict met by administrators. Rather than placing emphasis on events leading up to a crisis such as in the process model of conflict, working on designing outcomes to conflict situations is a higher priority. He described it this way:

> A conflict is a situation which needs a design effort.... What I am suggesting is that we drop the word "conflict." Instead of treating conflict thinking as something very special because of the conflict element we say "this is a situation that needs design thinking to design an outcome." The conflict element then comes in as one of the key design ingredients.

He provided in hierarchical order a series of steps for conflict thinking:

> We must start with the design idiom because it offers the most. The next best would be the problem solving idiom. Then would come the negotiating idiom which could always be regarded as a fall-back position (it is insufficiently creative for a lead position.) If all else fails then we are back to the "fight" idiom. But that is very different from starting with the "fight" idiom and never getting anywhere else.(p.43)

Thus De Bono(1990,1991) suggested creatively designed outcomes as a first approach in dealing with conflict situations. The third party in the process would be a designer rather than "a fetch-and-carry go-between." This suggests working with the issues in a creative, collaborative fashion such as with principled negotiation -- a people-centred approach that is "soft on the people", but "hard on the issues."

Outcomes of Conflict Management

Conflict Management Results: A number of social science researchers (Allport,1953; Hunt,1963; Driver & Steufert,1974) have reported that organisms need to maintain optimal levels of stimulation. Too little stimulation such as boredom, may be as unpleasant as too much tension. Thus in situations of low tension, individuals may actually seek out conflict (competition), or even hostility. The art of management is to turn this conflict into something that is productive, or at least, not destructive (Thomas, 1976, p.891).

Deutsch(1973) said that "conflict can occur in a cooperative or a competitive context and the processes of conflict resolution that are likely to be displayed will be strongly influenced by the context within which the conflict occurs"(p.11). In a cooperative environment, through trust and open communication, goals between parties are linked together for mutual achievement. On the other hand in the competitive situation through exploitation, and decreased communication the "probabilities of goal attainment are negatively correlated as one's chances increase the other's decreases."(p.366) Deutsch summarized: "cooperation breeds cooperation, while competition breeds competition"(p.367).

When frictions and tensions are building in an organization, proactive educators confront the issues in a way designed to have positive outcomes and good working relationships. "The art of conflict management involves maximizing constructive conflict and minimizing destructive conflict"(Lindelow,1981,p.293). Trust and team building expand the openness to issues that participants need. Power is used in a different way:

> Power does not mean control over people. Having power means gaining control of yourself first and then allowing others to gain control of themselves. It means that you have the authority, skills, and respect to allow others to feel that their decisions have meaning and dignity and contribute to the total welfare...the power to empower others. By allowing others to take initiative and responsibility for resolving conflicts, the school administrator becomes more powerful.(Maurer, 1991,p.213)

Jones et al.(1990) provided 4 processes for those who wish to create a win-win climate:

1. draw out as many concerns as possible from both parties.
2. clarify assumptions.

> 3. identify the real issue being confronted,
> 4. join together consciously in search of a solution through a problem solving process.(p.64J)

The key to these processes is to open up communication between the parties. Daresh(1988) confirmed that conflict is best managed through communication between conflicting parties. "Gaining an appreciation of underlying concerns increases the likelihood that a solution can be reached which satisfies those concerns for both parties" (Thomas, 1976,p.896). This allows the ideas, expectations, values, interests, and abilities to be presented in the context of all parties earnestly desiring to focus on their contribution to organizational goals. This does not mean that conflict will be eliminated. Positional bargaining between sub-units of an organization, or between organizations, will always be required because of varying points of views and positions. This conflict, or confusion, will need to be sorted out, even on a temporary basis (Ellmore,1978,p.220).

Jones et al.(1990) recommended confrontation as a conflict resolution skill in using these collaborative approaches(p.64J). Of course, one is confronting the issues, not the person. Dann(1987) in referring to the school setting said "personal qualities of honesty, straightforwardness, tolerance, and a good measure of courage are needed to successfully confront problems involving others." This "sorting out" is expedited by good communication skills including "a genuine willingness to listen."(p.20)

Gibson(1986) summarized a number of roadblock and enhancers of communication. Anyone who is engaged in assisting others in resolving conflict issues, needs to be aware of the importance of a positive climate for communication. These are considered "roadblocks": ordering, ignoring, sarcastic remarks, moralizing, advising, judging, praising, analyzing, reassuring, questioning, diverting, and name-calling. The following are techniques that enhance communication: careful listening, paraphrasing, silence, stating feelings, and allowing others to own solutions (p.60).

There has to be more than a good climate for communicating. Senge(1990) stressed the need for goals and team learning:

> A genuine vision breeds excellence and learning because people in the organization want to pursue these goals.... True learning begins with dialogue in which members suspend assumptions and think together to solve problems or chart the future."(p.2)

Drucker(1989) indicated, "We don't need charisma or programs. But we need clear goals. We need vision"(p.112). Parker(1990) providing further insights to effective organizational teams, suggested ideally that each team player has some of these characteristics:(summary mine)

1. Task oriented contributors sharing information and expertise.
2. Committed collaborators, flexible, open, co-operative.
3. Interpersonal communicators gluing together the team with skills like listening, patience, humour and tact.
4. Challengers who question goals, methods, and even ethics (i.e. real innovators) (pp.5-6)

This last point suggested that "challengers" to the status quo are important to organizations. Van Doorn(1966) in viewing conflict as a way for both parties to find improvements in situations suggested that the suppression of conflict may impede progress and maintain less than satisfactory situations (Thomas,1976,p.892).

The Harvard Business Review (1990) added one more dimension by suggesting that managers want their personal needs met within the organization. "Self-motivation reaches its apex when the goals of the individual and organization mesh, because the energies of both sides unite for mutual advantage(p.8). "KITA" (a kick in the pants) approaches are now considered to be ineffective(p.6). "Superiors must guard against becoming angry, disappointed, or judgemental when workers mention goals that conflict with what they expect to hear"(p.8). By being open, tolerant, and more accepting, the "productivity of the person and the organization will improve"(p.8).

Jones(1982) proposed a cooperative approach in school system labour management:

> The goal is simple: Solutions of the problems should potentially benefit everyone -- children, parents, teachers, administration and board members....Thus, collective problem solving, be it called integrative bargaining or collective gaining, or whatever, may just be a process of interpersonal communication whose time has come. (pp.18,20)

Principled Negotiation: A method for conflict management, principled negotiation, is explained by Fisher & Ury(1983) in their book Getting to Yes. In summary, their approach, involves the following:

-Participants are problem solvers.
-The goal is a wise outcome reached efficiently and amicably.
-Separate the people from the problem.

> -Be soft on the people, hard on the problem.
> -Proceed independent of trust.
> -Focus on interests, not positions.
> -Explore interests.
> -Avoid having a bottom line.
> -Invent options for mutual gain.
> -Develop multiple options to choose from; decide later.
> -Insist on using objective criteria.
> -Try to reach a result based on standards independent of will.
> -Reason and be open to reasons; yield to principle, not pressure.(p.13)

This method would have people working together attempting to find creative directions. The Alberta Teachers' Association has been piloting this method for in-school staff bickering as well as school-community conflict. The method is voluntary to the parties as it is based on the desire to quit blaming the other side and in turn focus on creatively reaching out for constructive directions (Podlosky self report, 1992).

Third Party Intervention: It may take a third party to help the conflicting parties focus on constructive conflict resolution. According to Bercovitch(1984) a process is required because just providing a chance for more communication could present more justifications for the conflicts. Of course, the third party has to work with parties that have the authority to resolve issues. He outlined the process:

> i) Diagnosis. Predominant third party activities, in this phase, include gathering data, developing an image of each other, discussing assumptions and perceptions, defining the problem, and generally agreeing on a conceptual framework that will guide each party's conflict management behaviour.
> ii) Conceptual resolution. Vital third party activities here include demonstrating compatibilities of perception, providing ways of thinking about conflicts, involving the parties in

> exploring issues and alternatives, and supplementing their insights.
> iii) Conflict resolution. During this phase the parties evaluate alternatives in terms of quality and acceptability and choose an alternative that can meet these criteria and satisfy them both. In this way a dysfunctional interaction pattern may be replaced by a more constructive one.(p.124)

Thomas(1976) stated that the third party serves to reopen communication, reduce hostility, build trust, question black-white stereotypes, and encourage problem solving. Parties are assisted in finding integrative solutions. The process was referred to as "deescalation" (p.911). Papa & Pood(1988) reported that this process produces,

> A climate in which people can clarify positions outside the context of conflict, thereby sharing knowledge of many different perspectives on an issue, [which] can increase the likelihood for effective conflict management and decision making. (p.422)

Goss and Taylor(1990) reported that mediation is not a new concept. The honourable way in the Chinese confucian view is to use moral persuasion and agreement. Japanese use community leaders to assist in dispute resolution. Neighbourhood meetings are often used in Africa to handle disagreements. In these three instances, our North American methods of lawyers and courts are not as significant. Today, mediation is often used in labour, family, commercial, environmental and community disputes.(p.4) (More information on third party involvement is found in Appendix G)

McMillan and Podlosky(1992) included some key elements of principled negotiation when a third party is used for conflict management. First, parties must not withdraw from frustration, hopelessness or retaliation. Second, parties must not use power-plays to win through threats, ultimatums or force. In other words, the avoidance or forcing of win-lose strategies are eliminated from the forum. As well it is made clear that "It does not matter how we got into this predicament -- but how we are going to get out of it." At this point the basic premises of principled negotiation are implemented: using a "we" approach; defining the problem in terms of mutual needs; having trust and respect; defeating the problem not the person; focusing on the future; empowering parties through validation of strengths; and offering choices and alternatives.

Therefore a relationship-oriented approach to conflict management may be a more satisfactory than less empowering approaches. According to Bercovitch(1984) the win-lose administrative or mechanical strategies have rarely been satisfactory.

> The size, complexity, and intensity of conflicts at all levels have created the need for mechanisms of conflict management.... The voluntary intervention of a third party is a new and more promising approach to conflict management. It involves a shift in emphasis from power-oriented strategies to participation-oriented strategies. Such a shift will result in sounder, though not always creative, conflict management.(p.133)

Despite this claim of the more participatory approach to conflict management, Bercovitch is very clear that "no definitive conclusions [have been reached] that certain types of intervention can lead to certain (and by implication better) outcomes." Third party interventions are "a means to an end, rather than ends in themselves."

> Much more useful research has to be undertaken before we can discuss the mutual dependence between types of intervention, an evaluation of their effectiveness, and the frequency of certain outcomes.(p.133)

In line with this encouragement for more research designed to achieve positive results in conflict management using a third party, Bercovitch proposed three categories which require a different orientation: individual, group, and organizational. In the first, individual, "values such as reduction of stress and anxiety, increased satisfaction, personal growth, strengthened interpersonal relations, higher motivation and enhanced self image" could be studied to determine their effect and how they are achieved. Secondly, in studying the group, emphasis could be placed on "group cohesion and support, trust, and role maintenance." The third dimension, organizational, could include "stability, costs, competence, control of violence and performance."(p.148) Along these three dimensions, Bercovitch called for more research on third party intervention:

> The task of studying and conceptualizing conflict interventions has only just begun.... we can learn something about what must, and can, be done in conflict situations. Such lessons could be invaluable in substituting effective interventions for laissez-faire social meddling.(p.149)

Conclusion: Despite the lack of conclusive evidence for specific formulae for types of conflict, it is evident that while conflict can be destructive, it can be focused to create positive results. Through visions of what the organization can achieve, with people who truly care about positive growth in organizations, an improved working climate can ensue.

The following section focuses on conceptual frameworks for this study.

Conceptual Framework through Questioning Technique

Patton(1990) provided a framework for information that is received in interviews. He stated that information can be divided into these categories: knowledge, experience, opinion, feeling, and sensory. Appendix A provides topics that were introduced to the ten superintendents if they did not address the questions in the initial open-ended question, "When you think of conflict and conflict management, what comes to mind?" This questioning technique provides a conceptual framework that acts as a lens to view the data received in the interviews.

Conceptual Framework for Decision Alternatives

A second framework is provided by Sergiovanni(1980). He proposed a viewpoint that uses two assumptions about the nature of humankind.
The first, a more scientific-descriptive approach, assumes that humans are basically self-centered, responding to the costs and benefits of various situations. The second, a more reflective-self, assumes man has beliefs, feelings, and values. Sergiovanni proposed that a person be considered on a

competing forces continuum between the scientific-descriptive and the reflective-self (figure 1). Added to this continuum are four dimensions: utility, ethical limits, justice, and transcendence (figure 2).

A summary of these four dimensions used to evaluate decision alternatives is found in Table 1.

To illustrate, using an extreme example, if a person had to steal food to survive, "ethical limits" would be low in use while "utility" considerations would be high. Most decisions made by a person would be more balanced along the four dimensions. In fact, a proposition of limits is proposed by Sergiovanni, "A serious deficit or excess in any one dimension of the pluralistic framework for evaluating decision alternatives negatively influences each of the other dimensions"(p.8). This framework for decision making speaks to the leader involved in choosing an approach for conflict management. A utilitarian approach might involve forcing one's will over another, thus not including much of a consideration for a "just" resolution with "transcendant" value. On the other hand, a "collaborative" approach will place high emphasis on "justice", "transcendence", and probably "ethical" considerations. In the one case the "bio-social" which is Sergiovanni's definition of the scientific approach is used. In the other, a qualitative humanistic element is utilized. This illustrates how a leader is drawn between competing action and controlling forces.

In Sergiovanni's article, he acknowledged that this theory is subject to

Table 1

Decision Alternative Dimensions

Dimension	Key Terms	Leadership Implications
Utility	practical production achievement material-production instrumental	Evaluate decision alternatives giving attention to the practical utility of each.
Transcendence	building esteem autonomy actualization aesthetic creative spiritual enrichment	Move beyond ordinary by giving attention to potential of individuals, organizations, community, and society. Grow to new levels of understanding, to higher standards of operation.
Justice	equitable distribution	Just distribution of benefits for each decision made.
Ethical limits	moral questions	Ethical questions must be considered in each case.

(adapted from Sergiovanni,1980, pp.4-5, used with permission of author.)

Figure 1 -- Decision Making Forces in Conflict Situations

```
------------>>>>>>>>>>>>  <<<<<<<<<<------------
 BIO-SOCIAL >>>>>>>>>>>>  <<<<<<<<<< HUMANISTIC
------------>>>>>>>>>>>>  <<<<<<<<<<------------
 -self interest        >  <         -reflection
 -self serving         >  <         -valuing
 -cost benefit         >  <         -intrinsic goals
 -maximize             >  <         -commitment
   advantage           >  <
                >>>>>>>>  <<<<<<<
```

(adapted from Sergiovanni,1980,pp.1-19, used with permission of author)

Figure 2--A Pluralistic Framework for Evaluating Educational Decisions

⇓ COMPETING ACTION FORCES ⇓

Utility	**Transcendence**
Justice	**Ethical Limits**

⇑ COMPETING CONTROLLING FORCES ⇑
(Sergiovanni,1980,p.6,used with permission of author)

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adjustment. He invited criticism:

> No pretence is made that the ideas are fully developed. If the social humanities concept is useable, widespread further study will be needed, and many more proposals will be considered before a workable methodology can be developed.(p.3)

This dissertation incorporates Sergiovanni's concepts to determine if they can be applied in one decision-making area; namely, conflict and conflict management.

Since the Sergiovanni article quoted above was written in 1980, one might apply a dated criticism to these concepts suggesting they would be relevant to the decade in which they were written. Appendix D provides a response to the inquiry made to T. J. Sergiovanni asking if his thinking had evolved since he wrote the article. In the reply, reference was made to his 1992 book, Moral Leadership. In this volume, Sergiovanni is much less theoretical, describing schools and school systems as communities, illustrating how the more humanistic element actually requires a simpler management system to elicit more complex, purpose-centered behaviour amongst teaching staff. He draws a parallel between the family and the school community, suggesting one would not have a CEO in charge of the family, so likewise he questions if we need an industrial management approach in schools. "Simple management systems tend to free people for complex behaviour"(p.96). In so doing, schools would provide these foci: (a) on teachers and students relying less on administrators and more on teacher's own convictions and resources; (b) on each student learning; (c) on the whole child with an ethic of caring; (d) on mutual respect wherein students and teachers can respect themselves; and (e) on a partnership of parents, teachers, community and school(pp.99-113). Within this nurturing context, however, he indicated there is still room for "leadership by outrage" when empowerment is abused.

> As important as leadership by outrage is, its intent is to kindle outrage in others. When it is successful, every member of the

> school community is encouraged to display outrage whenever the standard falls. An empowered school community bonded together by shared commitments and values, is a prerequisite for kindling outrage in others.(p.132)

Summary

This chapter has provided a current literature review of conflict and conflict management as it relates to school superintendents. The following is a summary of that review.

Conflict Theory: Four schools of thought relating to conflict as presented by Deutsch(1973) were summarized: psychoanalytic, learning, consistency, and role. The psychoanalytic theories focus on ego strength or lack thereof. A person who has strong ego strength can handle conflict situations in a more creative way. Persons with weak ego strength engage in activities and hold perceptions that can create and perpetuate conflict. Filtering one's thinking through irrational thought patterns can also create conflict producing perceptions.

One branch of learning theorists, connectionists, use terminology such as stimulus-response, ambivalent tendencies and reinforcement. Another group, cognitive learning theorists refer to approach-approach, avoidance-avoidance, and approach-avoidance conflict. Consistency theorists tend to focus on what is creating an imbalance or disequilibrium. They suggest that a homeostatic balance is the norm. Role theorists focus on the socialization of the individual and the role of social forces on the individual.

There is no single comprehensive theory of conflict, but rather some attempts to explain conflict producing behaviour through the aforementioned schools of thought.

Conflict Models: Three conflict models were presented: process, structural and organizational models. Each of these models are interdependent. None of the models totally explain conflict. A decision making model was also described. Pondy's process model pictures a conflict cycle of stages of stability leading to escalation, but returning again to full or partial equilibrium. The structural model examines the forces both inside and outside the individual in an attempt to explain conflict. Robbin's organizational model examines communication, structure and personal-behavioral factors. As stated previously, there is an overlap amongst these three models. The decision-making model illustrated the dilemmas facing the individual in conflict circumstances.

The Superintendent and Conflict: Superintendents are faced with pressures because of changes in society. Demands of the public along with interorganizational tensions create serious problems for the CEO of the school system.

Attitudes towards Peace and Conflict: Our society tends to focus more on conflict than on harmony. Children prefer war over peace because of the action of war. Newspapers provide far more information about conflicts and law breakers than they do about the ingredients of harmony. National identities are reinforced more when under attack than when at peace.

Attitudes toward peace can be changed according to the analyses by Tinker(1991). Positive self esteem is a necessary component of the persons presenting the peace initiative. Reinforcement activities are also necessary. Brown(1991) encouraged researchers to focus on harmony rather than disharmony. Peace and harmony in his view should be as important a subject for research as conflict.

Values and Conflict: If a claim is made that a value is superior to that of another person or group then conflict is more likely. The more a value is threatened the more chances of conflict. Values "determine acceptable actions, resolve conflicts, determine sanctions employed, and are integral to reward systems."(Fairholm,1991,p.66) Some superintendents are adept at sidestepping value issues by referring the issues to committees or state legislators(Wirt,1990,p.24).

Approaches to Conflict Management: Follett(1941) proposed these three methods for managing conflict: domination, compromise and integration. The final one, integration, involves looking for creative solutions which if accepted by both parties in conflict, are a more satisfying and longer lasting approach. Thomas(1976) provided five methods for conflict management found on a competitive vs. cooperative continuum: forcing, compromising, accommodating, collaborating, and avoiding. In direct relation to schools and school systems, Loewen(1983) and Fris(1991) developed a series of strategies used by principals and superintendents. Loewen found that superintendents were ill-equipped to use win-win strategies.

Dowd(1991) studied conflict from a different perspective than Loewen when examining conflict and conflict behaviour. He discovered that the American superintendents interviewed were more concerned with people conflict issues than issues such as money. Veridical or contingent issues were the most prevalent issues cited.

Kelley(1979) indicated that conflict is often caused in schools by interdependence. Suggestions of how to deal with the interdependent nature of schools was proposed by Pondy(1967).

Superintendent Strategies and Conflict: The need for empowerment was suggested as an approach that would counteract the decision making that is often outside the teachers' domain. Corwin(1969) found that such decision-making keeps conflicts to a manageable size rather than having them grow to unmanageable proportions.

Personality Styles and Conflict: Illustrations of conflicting personality types were given. The use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was referred to as a tool to help people appreciate differences. Further information was presented that some personality types tend to be more competitive (bossy,suspicious) while others are more cooperative (egalitarian, trusting).

Thinking and Conflict: DeBono(1990) suggested that we need to be more creative in our thinking to resist conflict. Such thinking as "black and white"; "right and wrong"; or "we and they" thinking into a much more creative mode is required. He then illustrated differences in thinking styles by using the water logic vs. rock logic analogy. Collaboration, integration, and principled negotiation to a certain extent use creative approaches. Sergiovanni used the amoeba as an analogy to illustrate creative thought processes. Designing outcomes was proposed as an approach to conflict management.

Conflict Management Outcomes: Trust and open communication in a cooperative setting are some of the ingredients proposed by Deutsch(1973) to assist in managing conflict constructively. The competitive environment involving exploitation and decreased communication has parties working in opposing directions. Team building and empowerment (shared power) were also stated as proactive approaches to conflict resolution. Methods of attaining a win-win environment were listed. Within this context, even challengers of the status quo can work harmoniously on change. Fisher and Ury's principled negotiation was referred to as a third party negotiation approach involving the cooperative approaches to conflict management. This was contrasted with the mechanical or power approaches to conflict resolution which have rarely been successful. The section concluded by referring to Bercovitch(1984), who recommended third party assistance in many conflict situations, but also recognized there is no absolute answer as to the right methods to use in each instance. He called for more research involving individual, group and organizational conflict.

Conceptual Frameworks: Two frameworks have been provided to assist in analyses of data received. Patton(1990) provided categories that served to produce topics that were introduced to superintendents if they did not addess them in the intitial questioning. The Sergiovanni(1980) framework focused the data analyses on the nature of decision making. Its use was also in response to Sergiovanni's request to see if the framework has application to other social situations than those he demonstrated in his article. In summary, this second framework placed decisions of the individual on a continuum between the reflective-self as compared to a more scientific-self. Added to this continuum would be four dimensions: utility, ethical limits, justice, and transcendence. Two figures and a table illustrated and explained the framework. Reference was made to Sergiovanni(1992) illustrating the community nature of schools in contrast to the industrial orientation of management often associated with schools.

This chapter has provided a review of current literature on conflict and conflict management. Conceptual frameworks have also been included. A description of the methodology and the pilot study is next.

CHAPTER 3

THE METHOD INCLUDING THE PILOT STUDY

Introduction

The first two chapters have provided an overview of this study along with a review of literature. A description of the methodology, the pilot study and the research conducted follows. The description of methodology is purposefully detailed. Taylor and Bogdan(1984) indicated:

> There is a tendency among many qualitative researchers to gloss over the specifics of their methodology. When we read these studies, we have no way of knowing whether the findings came from cultural knowledge, prior theoretical frameworks, direct personal experience, or actual fieldwork and interviewing(and if so, what kind of fieldwork or interviewing). Hence we do not know how to judge the credibility and validity of the researcher's account.(Stainback and Stainback, 1988, p.79)

Miles and Huberman(1984) expressed the same concern:

> In sum, we hope that more and more qualitative researchers will tell each other, concretely and specifically, just how they went about it, and what they learned. Perhaps we can all be as vivid and rich in describing our own work as we are in describing the inner and outer lives of the people we are studying. We owe them, and ourselves, at least that much.(p.252)

Symbolic Interactionism

The dissertation has as its focus subjective understandings and perceptions of superintendents of schools. As such it can be classified as a symbolic interaction study (Berg,1989,p.7). Patton(1990) provided this description:

> Symbolic interactionism is a social psychological approach most closely associated with George Herbert Mead(1934) and Herbert Blumer(1969). It is a perspective that places great emphasis on the importance of meaning and interpretation as essential human processes in reaction against behaviorism and mechanical stimulus-response psychology. People create shared meanings through their interactions, and those meanings become their reality.(p.76)

In this study those meanings are provided by superintendents of schools as they share their perceptions of conflict and conflict management. Blumer(1969), originator of the term, symbolic interactionism, explained that people's "actions operate to define the thing for the person; thus, symbolic interactionism sees meaning as social products formed through activities of people interacting" (p.5). In fact Blumer explained that there are three basic premises to understanding the processes of symbolic interactionism:

1. "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings which these things have for them."(p.2)

2. "Meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing."(p.4)

3. By the process of "communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings... a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formulation of action." (p.5)

Stryker & Serpe(1982), succinctly explained Mead's(1934) writings on the subject:

> Not only do "things" acquire meaning through ongoing activity,

> so do people. As coparticipants in social (cooperative problem solving) acts, persons communicate using vocal and other gestures which come to be significant symbols.... We come to know who others are – to invest them with meanings that define them for us.... These symbols provide the meaning of the objects, other people and things, that constitute our social and physical environment.(p.202)

In defining themselves through reflecting on their observations and actions, the person's self becomes an object of study. Rock(1979) indicated:

> Symbolic interactionism...conceives the self to be the lens through which the social world is refracted... interactionism is able to furnish a conception of social structure which is relatively free of scientific reification.(p.146)
>
> The self has become the chief focus of interactionism. It is treated as the author and product of forms of consciousness, the medium in which society is created. Selves arise when language enables men to reflect on themselves and see themselves as if they were strange and problematic: They are grounded in an internal dialogue between consciousness as subject and consciousness as object.... Dialogue, ordered by conversation and discourse, has become a model for analysis of all interaction.(p.236)

Rebach and Bruhn(1991) provided three theoretical orientations in sociological research: functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interaction. Functionalists see conflict as an aberration whereas conflict theorists see conflict as normal. Symbolic interactionism at a more "microsociological level...emphasizes the development of mutual adaptation and shared meaning through interaction."(p.9) The functionalist would focus on the roles of people and whether they are functional or dysfunctional. The conflict theorist might look at the roles of people as they compete for scarce resources. The symbolic interactionist researches "how the person's socialization process is internalized by the meanings that the individual has given to actions with other individuals or groups."(p.349).

Thus, in this research, an understanding of the individual's perception of conflict(s) was gained through a conversation with each of the ten superintendents. Superintendents reported on acting and reacting within a framework of their self-defined social environment. Experiences, decisions, and interpretations -- all added to the perspectives. What the participant decided to convey was also important as it provided an understanding of the participant's world and how that world was structured.

Interpretative Research

According to Hoy and Miskel(1987), research has shifted in approaches in the last 20 years because there has been a need for "more refined, useful, and situational oriented" research. In keeping with this shift, the interpretive approach taken in this research placed considerable emphasis on the self reports of the superintendents. Owens(1982) indicated that there are patterns or "regularities" in studying humans and their world and that are powerful in shaping behaviour. He also said,

> One cannot understand human behaviour without understanding the framework within which individuals under study interpret their environment, and that this, in turn, can best be understood through understanding their thoughts, feelings, values, perceptions, and their actions.(p.5)

Stainback and Stainback(1988) provided a summary of the undergirding principles of interpretive research. In their summary they recognized that "reality is what people perceive it to be" and "the focus is on design and procedures to gain real, rich, and deep data." They also acknowledged that "reality changes with changes in people's perceptions." (pp.8-9)

The self-reports of the superintendents were analyzed to determine what was important to the superintendents. Bogdan and Biklen(1982) described the process used:

> You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts....[Concepts emerge] from the bottom up (rather than from the top down), from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected.(p.29)

This is quite a different approach than starting with a hypothesis and seeking support or rejection as in quantitative research. Instead the reasoning and thought processes of the individuals being interviewed were gathered. Key points were separated to form initial categories. Data from the interviews were then placed within the categories to determine the breadth of the interviewees' actions and thoughts for that category. This formed the basis for writing about the categories. The writer had in mind that new categories may have needed to have been developed. Some categories may have needed to have been discarded. Basic patterns and relationships were identified. Theory development occurred as the researcher "continually compared specific incidents in the data, refined the categories, identified their properties,[and] explored their relationships with one another."(Stainback & Stainback,1988,p.47)

The prime purpose of this research was to determine how selected superintendents of schools interpreted and managed conflict. Or, as Patton(1990) stated, "What common set of symbols and understandings have emerged to give meaning to people's interactions?"(p.75) In this research, the social interactions reported provided an opportunity to gain an understanding of the superintendents' interpretations of their world. The significant symbols and principles that were part of the thinking and interpretation of this social interaction entered the researcher's domain. The interpretation of that interaction formed the core of this study.

Considerable emphasis was placed in this study of conflict and conflict management on drawing conclusions based on the self-reports of the superintendents. Throughout the process of deciding on methods to use, I continually kept asking myself, "Will this particular technique affect my conclusions?" For example, in framing questions to be researched I asked myself whether the questions would drive the data, or would the data drive the findings. The conclusion that I drew was – who I am as a person, the questions that I ask, the superintendents that I choose, the themes that I select, are influenced by my personal bias.

> Researchers stress that research is valuebound and that this should be understood and taken into account when conducting and reporting research results. According to them, research is influenced by the values of the researcher when he or she selects the problem to be investigated, frames the questions to be answered, chooses the measuring instruments and design of

> the study, and analyses and interprets the data.(Lincoln & Gupta in Stainback and Stainback,1988,p.4)

In order to have credible results, one has to do whatever is reasonable to keep these biases from over-influencing the final conclusions. Rich data with plenty of direct quotes allow the reader to draw conclusions as to the amount of researcher bias that may have entered into conclusions. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged that qualitative research is not value-free. The aforementioned conceptual frameworks along with the researchers background provide a lens through which understanding is achieved. No matter how pure the intent, researcher bias is present.

Should the literature be reviewed prior to collecting data? Do the findings and generalizations from the literature influence the themes chosen and the conclusions drawn? Glesne and Peshkin(1992) addressed this issue.

> Knowledge of the literature will help you judge whether your research plans go beyond existing findings and may therefore contribute to your field of study. Some qualitative researchers argue against reviewing the literature until after data collection has begun, for fear the researcher will be unduly influenced by the conceptual frameworks, research designs, techniques, and theories of others. Although we acknowledge the possibility, we think that the benefits of reviewing literature before data collection outweigh harmful effects.(p.17)

The reverse also occurs. Research data influenced the literature to be reviewed. For example, "principled negotiation" became more important because one of the superintendents referred to it in the interview. Likewise notions of empowerment, people versus task perspectives, nurturing, and values took on new meanings because of the approaches that were reported by superintendents.

Producing questions, doing a pilot study, framing a question schedule(Appendix A), providing a conceptual framework and establishing themes – all had to be reviewed to determine if they were unnecessarily biasing conclusions. In all of these cases, care was taken to have self-reports drive the direction of data collection and subsequent analyses rather than the techniques used.

Collection and Organization of Data

The data for this dissertation study were obtained by asking the superintendents: "When you think of conflict and conflict management, what comes to mind?" This was done in such a way as to allow the interviewer and interviewee to establish a comfortable environment and to give some control of the direction of the interview to the participant. The interviewer asked for more information and clarification in a non-evaluative and non judgemental way. The purpose was to "understand the people and situations... rather than judging or evaluating them"(Wolcott in Stainback and Stainback,1988,p.15).

Before going on to the next stage the main question was asked again, "Is there anything else that comes to mind about conflict and conflict management?" If any of the ideas in Appendix A were not addressed, they were introduced. By receiving this information a description of the superintendents' experiences and interpretations with conflict and conflict management was provided.

Flexibility in moving and transferring data was achieved by using a computer. Without this capability, the processes of working and reworking categories would have been much more difficult. Through the methods used, data were easily shifted thus negating any resistance through fatigue to the task at hand.

Specifically, this is the process that was followed after the interviews with the superintendents had been transcribed. Through the use of the two separate screens on the word processor, data were transferred in the following sequence:

1) Initially, a separate file for each superintendent was saved that contained the transcribed interview.

2) The appropriate sections of the interview were transferred to another screen, reorganizing the interview under each of the themes. A skeleton outline of a list of the themes generated from the data was the starting point. Excerpts were inserted into the appropriate areas of the outline. The results of this exercise was saved as a separate file for each superintendent.

3) Data were then transferred to a second set of files for each of the themes. For example, file "consolid.001" held each of the relevant excerpts for all superintendents on "The nature of conflict." Refinement of the

themes occurred during this process as this was a test to see if each superintendent contributed information to that category. Information that was left over was analyzed to see if another set of themes should be considered. In fact, no additional themes were developed.

4) A working screen was used to transfer sections of the excerpts from the "CONSOLID" files. Transition comments and conceptual summaries were then added to this screen.

Theme Identification

The processes described above were preceded by a pilot study. Initially three pilot interviews were conducted. This provided an opportunity to attempt to identify some potential themes for the actual study. Each of the interviews was scanned with a descriptor placed on each of the sections in the three transcripts. In this coding, there were 29 different descriptors that did not blend easily into four or five headings. The exercise was redone by using the separate screens of the word processing program. This time 16 headings were developed, but the same problem occurred in that they did not blend into a few main headings. The approach was also subject to criticism because the themes were not really "emerging." Rather they were categories that mechanistically came from the list of questions that were referenced back to Patton's questioning technique. (Appendix A) Identifying common themes was left until more data collection was done in the actual study.

The next work on theme identification was done towards the end of the interviews with the ten superintendents. At this time themes began to emerge. In keeping with the previously described methodology, themes were not preset. Although it must be acknowledged that although attempts were made to reduce researcher bias, the questioning technique (Appendix A) was an integral part of the conceptual frameworks for this research.

Miles and Huberman(1984) cautioned about the need to be sceptical in selecting themes:

> When one is working with text, or less well-organized displays, one will often note recurring patterns, themes, or "Gestalts," which pull together a lot of separate pieces of data. Something jumps out at you, suddenly makes sense.... The human mind finds patterns so quickly and easily that it needs no how-to advice. Patterns just "happen" almost too quickly. The important thing is to be able to (a) see real added evidence of a pattern; (b) remain open to disconfirming evidence when it appears.(p.216)

The following is the technical process that occurred. As the recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher, notes were kept of potential themes. Constant personal reflection became part of the process. To illustrate, one of the notes read, "teamwork (collaboration?), communication, change, child centered." By the time that the tenth transcript was completed (thirteenth if the pilots were included), the headings that were used, with minor modifications, had emerged. It is recognized that any number of different themes could have been chosen. The reader will note that "change" and "child centred" from the above illustration, were not selected.

"Teamwork" and "communication" were. "Collaboration" was still considered an important topic but was used in conjunction with "teamwork."

Themes emerged from the data. As suggested by Bogdan and Bicklen(1982) the puzzle had to form from the pieces in the data. In actual fact, I kept asking myself, what were the underlying concepts that the superintendents were providing? Thus, the themes reflected the self-reported value orientation and the culture within which the superintendents worked.

The themes also reflected a growing understanding of conflict and conflict management by the researcher as the interviews progressed. Questions became broader taking into account perceptions of the researcher. The results of this increased understanding are shown in both the themes selected and the data presented. This in turn provided depth to the conclusions and relationship to the conceptual frameworks. The constantly changing lens illustrates the dynamic quality of qualitative research using symbolic interactionism.

All of the data from the interviews that would fit under "Nature of Conflict" in contrast to "Conflict Management" was placed in one 40 page single spaced file. Within that sort was a number of sub-headings: introduction, we-they, parent vs., administration-teacher, emotional element, lack of emotional element, principal role, program changes, superintendent-board, and other. This led to the identification of two major themes: "The

Nature of Conflict" and "The Emotional Element." Through the use of the computer's dual screen capability, data could be moved during the writing phase to suit the most appropriate location for presentation. A similar approach was used for each of the other themes.

The switch in the method of theme identification from that used during the pilot study data analysis (theme-oriented frames) suggests the creativity that is available to the researcher. Since the technique was driving the theme identification rather than the data, a new approach was sought. Stainback and Stainback(1988) on the one hand supported a "highly systematic, consistent attention to and analysis of data as they are being collected. But they also indicated that qualitative research,

> alters its structure as data from the field indicates what is needed. In this way, the specific research questions and the methods employed are grounded on the data from the "real" world" (p.75).

Comment on Methods

Some interpretive studies have involved living in the actual world of the parties being studied over a period of time. The researcher felt that this study would not lend itself to having a third party present in conflict circumstances. It is relevant to indicate that two superintendents mentioned that they would have been prepared to have the researcher interview people with whom they had conflict to verify if their perceptions were valid. A follow-up to this research could use that method. Only self reports of superintendents were used in keeping with the pre-defined research methodology.

The Participants

The approach used in selecting superintendents to be interviewed would be called "purposeful sampling"(Stainback and Stainback,1988,p.30). A balance was sought between small, medium and large jurisdiction superintendents as well as a mix of rural, small urban and large urban. Some superintendents were selected from the north, central and south portions of the province. Similar diversity between public and separate systems was achieved. Newly appointed superintendents were not interviewed.

In all but four cases, superintendents were interviewed in their offices. Two of the interviews were conducted in the researcher's office at the University. A northern superintendent met the researcher in a hotel room during a conference. Another interview was conducted late on a Friday afternoon at the superintendent's home.

Trustworthiness

The methodology of this dissertation was monitored by the thesis supervisor. It was also reviewed by the supervision committee of five faculty in the candidacy oral examination. The research was conducted on the basis of that approval.

Interviews were tape-recorded to ensure accuracy of recall as well as to provide a verifiable audit trail. The recordings were transcribed by the author to provide a hard copy.

Perception checks were done continuously throughout each interview. This was done to insure interpretations were correct and to ensure that full details were received.

Accuracy of the transcription was spot-checked by an independent agent. He found no errors in the transcription. Substantial parts of the interviews are provided in chapter four. This provides the opportunity for readers to affirm the researcher's conclusions. Sections of the interviews that were not reported in the text were kept in a separate file. A review of this file assured the researcher that no significant data had been missed, or no additional themes should be added. In addition, the superintendents were encouraged to phone or write the researcher if additional insights would add to the research. Informal perception checks with five of the superintendents, between one month to six months after the interviews, assured the researcher that the interviewees were very comfortable with the process and the information that had been provided.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to selected superintendents of schools in the province of Alberta during April and May, 1992. The study was delimited to those who participated in the study. Generalizability to other superintendents should be made with caution.

Limitations

The following are limitations of this study:

1. Possible inaccurate recall by the superintendents because of such factors as emotional overlay and proximity of time to the events. The question must be kept in mind, "Do individuals recall with accuracy events in their lives?"

2. Differences of situations were also possible because of different geographical locations and varying sizes of jurisdictions.

3. The narrow time frame (three months) provided time specific events only. In general, this interval was a stable time in Alberta school districts. The conclusions drawn in this study might have been quite different if the interviews were conducted at a time of severe restraint.

4. Two superintendents who were originally selected were unable to be interviewed because of time commitments surrounding a strike in Central Alberta. All other selected superintendents accepted the invitation to be interviewed.

5. There was also potential for withholding of important details because the researcher was not a peer of the superintendents, although no overt intent was noted (e.g.,sanitizing, idealizing).

6. Superintendents are very busy people. Additional access to the superintendents to review their transcripts and to attend additional interviews for further insights was not considered to be a viable option.

Nevertheless the researcher felt he had received adequate data because of the strong verbal skills and analytical abilities of the superintendents.

7. There is a possibility that the researcher was influenced by his psychology and educational psychology background when framing questions. A similar limitation might have occured in interpreting the answers to questions and topics posed.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed by letter that their participation was voluntary and that all responses would remain confidential(See appendix B). Furthermore, respondents were informed that they could review a transcript of their responses if desired. To further protect anonymity, pseudonyms and generic titles were used. Locations were omitted.

The research proposal was submitted to the Department of Educational Administration for review to insure that the University of Alberta ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects were followed.

The Pilot Study

The three doctoral students in the pilot study provided as real an interview situation as the actual study. The three pilot interviewees were experienced senior administrative officers of school systems. As such, they could relate well to the topic and gave plenty of examples of conflict and conflict management. They were open and frank in handling the questions.

Even though the pilot interviews might be considered to be a "dry run" to the actual study, the interviewees took the process very seriously. Appendix F provides examples of the content received. As can be seen in these samples, the reflective listening technique and effective use of silence used in the pilot study worked well in collecting data.

Besides confirming my ability to conduct these interviews with ease and effectively applied interviewing techniques, some key discoveries occurred in the pilot study. I became aware that the question (from Appendix A) relating to emotional support could be interpreted differently by different respondants, thus the topic needed to be pursued beyond the first answer given, to include personal emotional support, peer support and the role of one's significant other as a possible confidant. The second area in which the pilots assisted me was the way themes emerged from the data. That was described in detail earlier. Appendix E contains the descriptors that were used in both of the exercises described. Some examples of the descriptors and the data that were received is found in Appendix F. While each person interviewed was different and came from diverse circumstances, all acknowledged that there is conflict and that conflict needs to be understood and managed.

The information received in these pilot interviews is rich and could have been part of the overall analysis of the final study. However, in keeping with the parameters of the definition of "superintendent" the data

Table 2
Demographic Data of Interviewees

	Pilot	Study
Number Superintendents Interviewed	3	10
Gender	Female.....1 Male.......2	Female.....3 Male.......7
CEO status	Former CEO..1 Asst. Supt..2	Chief Executive Officers 8 Urban Area (District) Superintendents 2
Highest Education	Doct. Stud.(UofA)-3	Phd. 2 Doct.Stud.(UofA) 1 Doct.Cand.(oth) 2 Masters 3 Masters Student 1 Bachelors 1
Jurisdiction Size(Students)		
<1000	 0	 2
1000- 5000	 2	 4
5000-10000	 0	 1
>10,000	 1	 3
Province of Alberta Location	Rural 1 Mix 1 Small Urban 1	Rural 4 Small Urban 3 Large Urban 3
	North 1 Central 2 South 0	North 2 Central 5 South 3
Average Years in Position	7	8
Average Age	45 (Range 42-50)	50 (Range 44-60)
Public/Separate	Public 3	Public 8 Separate 2

were not used in the overall analysis as the three pilot interviewees were not CEO's at the time of the interviews.

In relation to the conceptual frameworks presented earlier, no overt approach was taken to relate it to the pilot study. However, in reference to the second conceptual frameork, one area, "the proposition of limits" was illustrated. In that case, a superintendent was criticized by one of the school trustees for something the superintendent's own children had done. The superintendent's wife took such exception to the incident that she complained to the minister of education. In reference to the framework, the superintendent was caught in a situation with "all his eggs in one basket." That is, one hundred percent of the decision went into the "justice quadrant" of the framework to the exclusion of "ethics"(dealing face to face with the trustee), "utility"(shutting your mouth to keep your job) and "transcendence"(keeping a good relationship with the trustee no matter how threatening the situation). The proposition of limits proposed by Sergiovanni(1980) states, "A serious deficit or excess in any one dimension of the pluralistic framework for evaluating decision alternatives negatively influences each of the other dimensions"(p.8) This is an example of when the ability to have a balanced approach by the superintendent was totally countered by the desire to have "justice." This conflict situation proved to be a damaging one for the superintendent. It preceded another serious conflict with the trustee.

In conclusion, the pilot was useful in preparation for the interviews. It also helped focus on the data that would ultimately be analyzed. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the data from the ten interviews. The demographic data (table 2) provided the context for these interviews.

CHAPTER 4

MAJOR THEMES WHICH EMERGED, DATA AND OBSERVATIONS

Introduction

Superintendents were asked "What comes to mind when you think of conflict and conflict management?" A similar question was asked midway through the interview. A series of topics emanating from the first conceptual framework (see Appenix A) were introduced in the second part of the interview if the superintendent had not addressed them in the initial questioning. The responses provided an insight into the superintendents' understanding of the nature of conflict. Those understandings are reported in the sections which follow. With the exception of aforementioned changes in the script such as omitting names and locations, the sections of the interviews provided in this chapter are provided verbatim. This provides readers with the opportunity to do their own analysis. Readers are also reminded that the names chosen were Sam, George, Joe, Ted, Kim, Lue, Lil, Cam, Art and Tim.

The themes that emerged from self-reports of superintendents are:

THEME ONE: The Nature of Conflict

THEME TWO: The Emotional Element

THEME THREE: Confident Approaches

THEME FOUR: Team Work

THEME FIVE: Communication

THEME SIX: Care

The process of selecting these themes was reported earlier. A summary is found in table 3. In brief, attempts were made to identify themes after the first pilot interview. A second effort was made following the three pilot interviews. These attempts are reported in Appendix E. The approach could be mechanistically tracked back to the questioning techniques used. Themes had not emerged and therefore were rejected.

More success was achieved towards the end of the period of time that interviews were conducted. Considerable reflection on the data yielded patterns that started to emerge following the sixth interview. While transcribing the seventh to tenth interview small notes were maintained of potential themes. In essence, the researcher kept asking himself, "What are superintendents really saying?" By responding to this question a series of rough notes accumulated. These were refined following the typing of the tenth interview. Further refinement occurred during the writing process of the dissertation. Following the advice of Miles and Huberman (1984) conscious decisions were made to determine if there was "added evidence" for the selection of a theme. As well, disconfirming evidence was sought to make sure the theme was suitable. As stated earlier, considerable efforts were taken to have themes emerge from the data not from the questions posed. Consistent with the earlier described theme emergence process, the themes had to come from the data collected, not from what the researcher

Table 3

Theme Emergence

Trial	Source of Data	Method	Comments
One	Pilot 1	Descriptors were written beside each new idea presented.	Twenty-nine different ideas were provided. These did not fit into categories.(See Appendix E)
Two	All Pilots	Categories were selected from the 3 pilot interviews. Data were placed under each of the categories. (See Appendices E & F)	The categories did not collapse into a few main themes. The headings tended to come from the questions posed and thus did not emerge from the data.
Three	Ten Study Interviews	Towards the end of the transcription process a series of notes were kept of potential themes. Broad categories that emerged from the data were sought. This stage began the process of refinement of themes.	From this work the final themes were chosen. One of the notes read: "teamwork (collaboration?), communication, change and child centered. The final themes of "teamwork" and "communication" were selected.

Trial	Source of Data	Method	Comments
Four	Ten Study Interviews	Using the computer's dual screen, data were shifted under various headings within each theme. A number of subheadings were inserted, with the data being sorted under those sub headings. New categories were sought while unusable categories were discarded. Data that were not used in the sorts was kept in a separate computer file to see if those data held another theme.	All data relating to "conflict" were placed under subheadings: introduction, we-they, parent vs., administrator - teacher, emotional element, lack of emotional support, principal role, program changes, supt.-board, and other. Through this process two themes emerged: "The Nature of Conflict" and "The Emotional Element." The same process occurred under the major heading "Conflict management."
Five	Ten Study Interviews	Continued refinement occurred in the writing process. After the first draft, the theme "proactive approaches" was discarded as it was redundant. Only significant data were maintained in the written drafts.	The themes chosen were: 1) The Nature of Conflict. 2) The Emotional Element. 3) Confident Approaches. 4) Team Work. 5) Communication. 6) Care.

thought should happen. The overall picture took "shape as you collect[ed] and examine[d] the parts....from the disparate pieces of collected evidence" (Bogdan and Bicklen, 1982, p.29).

THEME ONE: The Nature of Conflict--The Superintendent's Perspective.

After being asked the opening question, "When you think of conflict and conflict management, what comes to mind?", all superintendents talked about conflicts experienced. There were conflicts over ideas, and perspectives with the various stakeholders: administrative staff, boards, teaching staff, parents and government officials. Some conflicts involved power and territoriality. Scarcity of resources was also mentioned. It was acknowledged that conflict can be constructive as well as destructive.

Tim indicated that two things came to mind about conflict:

> One is that conflict is more something within yourself. Conflict with your own way of thinking. With issues, your own philosophy, where you stand and so on. Conflict as defined as a disagreement between people is the second notion that comes to my mind.

Art reported that conflict is taking "an increasing amount of time. And a puzzle that involves making use of energy that probably gets misspent." Lil said that it is "a terrible waste of energy" as it "slows down an organization." However, Art conceded that it is a "normal and natural part" of human enterprises and the task is "to overcome the downside" and utilize "the productive side of conflict." Ted echoed this point of view:

> If one goes into conflict in a positional point of view "I am right" -- "you are wrong" -- "there is no change here" -- then it can be pretty destructive. But if conflict becomes a catalyst to positive change, conflict can really improve the school jurisdiction.

Art indicated that unfortunately some staff do not have the basic beliefs that "schools exist for kids."

> What everybody doesn't know is all the work that went on with those individuals to try to make them better than they were allowing themselves to be. To get them to buy into the team to get them to buy into the process and style and everything else. To get them to buy into the simple proposition that school exists for kids. They don't exist for principals, superintendents and staff. And some people seem to think that they did. I differ considerably.

Lil felt she was doing the best for the children of her jurisdiction in not continuing a contract.

> I felt very strongly about that. I didn't want my name on somebody's tenured position if I didn't really believe they were good for kids. I wasn't going to go into this half heartedly. So I felt I had to really be very strong inside myself and hold on to that fundamental belief this is not a good person to be working with kids -- the first time I had to do this it was very, very difficult but it has not been so difficult since.

Joe listed a number of "conflict" areas that he has encountered as a superintendent:

> A conflict of philosophy -- those are probably the most serious. And then a second one is a conflict of authority. Who has responsibility and authority to do what? Another conflict that I see is one of resources. Who is going to have the resources to do this or do that? And I suppose the classic conflict that a school system has is when there is a strike. I suppose as a superintendent I should be thinking of conflict with the trustees -- its funny that does not really come to my mind. I think far more of conflict between parties within the

> administration. Conflict with negotiations. Conflict with parents who feel they want something done in a certain way and cannot accept any other way of doing it -- I see a more severe thing as a personal conflict of individuals rather than organizational conflict between this organization and that organization. Although I suppose in negotiations and collective agreements one can see that -- or conflict we might have with Alberta Education would be that sort of issue. But I think those issues tend not to be the sort of gut tugging things that the personal ones have. It is more formalized, more regulated, less personalized.

In the preceding quote from Joe, mention was made regarding parent demands. George indicated that he had two situations "the resolution of [which] is quite clearly outlined in the appeal procedures now within the school act":

> And the Minister [of Education] said, "No, the board is quite correct. They have certainly gone a long way in assisting you with this special needs program that you have." It wasn't a placement argument you see, and that was the technical thing. They said, "No, we think the board is within their rights. They are transporting the child to the city. You demanded another placement within the city and it will be your responsibility to get him there."

Cam also mentioned special education placement as a conflict situation he and the board had to deal with:

> And there we run into a conflict situation where the parents feel that the children have not been adequately taught reading for whatever reason, although they seem to generally say the teachers have done all they can, but they don't have the skills and we don't know why, or it isn't working. So you get into that kind of situation where you have to persuade parents that there isn't going to be support, financial support[to go to a $1000/week clinic]. That is done at the principal's level. And I get drawn into the situation when the parent comes in and complains that inadequate attention to their views.... What we have ended up doing is not saying you can't go, but we have

> said that if you are going 80% of the cost is yours. We will assist you but in this minor way. And that resulted in an appeal to the minister, and appeal to the board.

Three superintendents, Art, Joe and Sam mentioned the "we-they" aspect of conflict. The "we" was the central office staff or the board, while the "they" was the teachers. Joe and Sam mentioned it when they were referring to pre and post contract negotiations, while Art referred to it as a puzzle that certain issues create a "we" in the schools and "they" in the central office.

> Sam: you can really see a difference before there is a settlement. There is a tenseness... a we-they feeling. I think it is being nurtured somewhat. Then it dies down -- but then there is always a carry over of that we-they in dealing with a Union.

> Joe: [a strike] is a very unpleasant thing. The thing that I observed in a strike situation how people no longer become individuals. They become a group. The whole issue of group psychology comes into play. That was the most interesting thing I learned.

Ted meanwhile says that he tries to avoid conflict, but feels that it is "pie in the sky" if you think you can do that all the time. There is "The conflict of ideas, a conflict of articulateable knowledge" and "conflict of an emotional nature which is often secondary to a significant problem that may be happening somewhere." He describes a third type, the conflict of power:

> Where one person wishes to express power over another. And that power could be through manipulation of a subordinate to superordinate not just superordinate to subordinate.

Kim focused on conflict between a school and the community, pointing out that conflict comes from "different places -- different points of view." She gave an example a point of view of central office versus the point of view of the community:

> We took the principal out of a school who was very popular at the last minute. We put a new principal in without consulting the community in terms of the fact that we were taking one out and putting another one in. That was the first mistake–that was the biggest mistake. That was the thing right there. We set the person up for failure. And then when you add to that some concerns that were legitimate and it made it an impossible situation.

Lue compared her superintendent role with previous roles.

> If you move from being a principal... you have had the opportunity to deal with conflict before....I had also been in central office positions, take for example, supervisor of curriculum, where I really didn't deal with people conflict. There might have been conflict in issues or beliefs, but not anywhere near the kinds of intense situations that you get into in my position.

Lil who comes from a small school jurisdiction, expanded on the type of conflict situation,

> If I get involved in conflicts it is usually a situation at the school that can't be resolved between a parent and a principal or a student and a principal....its funny, we are talking today because although I haven't for many months now had many conflicts. In the last two weeks we seemed to have had an abnormally high number of them. It is a good time to talk to me (laugh).

Art mentioned a different type of conflict, namely, territoriality. He gave an illustration at the central office level:

> And so the unfortunate candidate has spent some time making the fortunate candidate, the successful candidate look as bad as politically he can make him look. Just because he has the

territory that the other individual wanted.

Cam indicated that the previous superintendent fell victim to the conflicts that are a part of the smaller communities. He described the community networks and the power that emanates from informal relationships. They can create a more complex conflict situation – one in which the superintendent is at a disadvantage.

> I had never before been in a superintendency or an administrative position of any kind, where when I sat down with a lay board anyone of them could tell me more about what had gone on in the school than I knew. Because his sister is a teacher, his wife is a teacher, her husband is a teacher. That is one scenario. The other is that all of them have children in the very school we are talking about. Not all of them, but two thirds of them. All of them have neighbours that have five kids who they have a beer with every night, with the neighbours and they hear everything that has gone on. And it was a shock to me at the first few board meetings that I attended here to find out how much the board members knew of the daily details. Did you know that so and so said this to so and so's child the other day? Did you know that this child was allowed to do this and this one isn't? Intimate, minute detail of words and actions on a daily basis. And then suddenly you find you are talking about the teachers and you find this teacher is her sister, this teacher is his nephew, this teacher is married to – those informal connections are so powerful in this community. That is what happened to the previous superintendent. The informal situation overpowered him and got him out of here. And I suppose that's an area you don't expect conflict. You expect conflict to be out here. You don't expect the power to be brokeraged in every living room.

Sam took an initial look at the causes of conflict, focusing on difficulties that arise because trust had not been established. On the other hand, he looked at conflicts in a positive light as well.

> Conflict seems to come when there is a problem of

> communication or understanding what is at stake. What people are attempting to achieve.... Or there isn't trust established.... One question I would say is what are the positive aspects.... Conflict gives you a signal that there is a problem. It can be a learning experience. And sometimes you need to have that intensity to associate with the conflict to try to facilitate change.

Tim asked an interesting question about conflict:

> I suppose I am always interested, why do people thrive on conflict? An interesting one for me. Why do people consciously seek [it] out? I remember some years ago a trustee would say to me, I just love conflicts, arguing, that kind of stuff. I would go eight blocks out of my way to get into a situation. And so what makes that person tick?

Tim made an observation near the middle of the interview about his personal definition of conflict.

> Most people view conflict first and foremost as a disagreement, violent argument, and even physical fights as a conflict. That to me is the reality or a definition of that word. I view it more as straightening out my own thinking. Making it conflict free. Understanding what drives me, what motivates me, what's my philosophy, where do I sit? I apply my philosophy and I extend it over into regions -- what would I do? And make sure that my philosophy is consistent.

Summary: Superintendents can expect to have experiences with conflict. While most would prefer to have harmony, conflict was described as being a part of the superintendent's world. In some instances it was viewed somewhat neutrally as something that can be expected, while in other cases it was "gut wrenching" and had to be dealt with immediately. There was recognition that conflict can stimulate creative problem solving, or at least signal that there is a problem. 7 One of the tougher situations to deal with is the "we-they" mentality that is particularly evident in a contract negotiation period.

THEME TWO: The Emotional Element

The type of emotion described by the superintendents was the emotion they feel themselves. While conflict can be unemotional such as a debate with Alberta Education or the logistics of salary negotiations, there are cases where the debates can heat up:

> Sam: You don't necessarily want to create conflict or to seek it out. But I don't think it should be seen as totally negative. A debate. You have an argument with someone. You state your view and they state their view. And you get quite emotional about it. That is how you feel.

> George: I get involved with a fair amount of emotion. We just met with the deputy minister this week... I had to ask him in somewhat of an emotional way because in his speech to us he was saying that 30% of our kids drop out yet in his own vision report the first thing in the last 10 years the grade 12 drop out problem has diminished from being 12% in 1979 to 7.5% in 1989. And the way it came out was that the schools are doing a terrible job out there.

Personnel matters were a source of agonizing for some of the superintendents.

> George: I do take it home mentally. I can't get away from it. And when I find it is probably on my mind most is during my sleep. I will be thinking about it when I am driving or travelling. Or when I am working around the house...

> Joe: By the time situations like that get to my desk there is a high degree of severity -- a high degree of importance. And a high emotional content. And when it involves looking at dismissing a staff member or demoting a person, those are very, very difficult. And it is also difficult when you have to select someone for a position for a promotion and you have several

> good applicants and you can only select one.
>
> Ted: Conflict that involves personnel where you may have to take drastic action. Like firing somebody or something like that. Ya, they eat at my gut. I just don't like doing them and I don't think anybody in my position does.

Internal emotional struggles were described by Cam. After three attempts at writing a report he shared his feelings of indecisiveness:

> And it is still being changed and altered and what I am trying to do is try to come up with a report that says quite simply you are doing fine, but you are a beginning teacher, and these are the major points that I want you to think about. But I am really happy to see that you are doing this and this and this. That sounds very simple, but as soon as you start putting it down, it is like a foggy cloud that starts bulging in one way or another. And all of a sudden you read it and think, "my god it sounds negative. This will just hit him between the eyes. The guy will go and commit suicide." And so you tear it up and you have another try. And then you think, "my god, I have glossed over what is a serious problem."

Another factor of conflict, was the superintendent's reaction to a conflict situation. Joe indicated how he reacted when someone made an error which should not have been made.

> I guess one thing, when I think about myself when a real foul up first hits my desk -- I hit the ceiling. But then I fall right back into my chair. Like I can really hit a flash point at times and then it is gone. And I don't carry grudges or resentments towards people. But for a minute or two, oh boy, can I get irritated about it.

A similar reaction was expressed by Cam:

> And first of all, the principal was not here, so I dashed off a note that ripped up one side and down the other. The next morning I came in and said, "Where is that note? Tear it up. I won't send it." I find I am vascilating between the desire to be

> straight forward, and if necessary brusque, brutally honest, call it what you like, and the desire to get the message across without offending anybody.

Joe summed up his experience with conflict. While there is a degree of rational thought, there is also emotion.

> I really think of conflict and conflict management; I think of an interpersonal basis. Bango. You and me, myself and another person or a group of people or a smaller group or whatever or a large group. Right up front I see it very much as a personal issue and emotional issue. Not something you sit back and figure through. Its a process you work through with logic, with emotion, the whole works.

One of the superintendents referred to a disagreement he had with a board member. His advice was to try not to solve conflicts through "emotion and power." Even though the superintendent was backed by the rest of the board in this conflict, he said you can only do that a certain number of times. According to him you only have a certain number of chits. In his opinion "I won; he lost. Therefore we both lost."

Summary: This section has focused on the emotional element emanating from conflict situations. Superintendents can expect some personal emotional struggles and will also have to deal with some people who can be quite emotional. The next sections relate how conflict is managed.

THEME THREE: Confident Approaches

Introduction: A significant characteristic of each of the superintendents was that at some point in the interview they all expressed confidence in their conflict management approaches. Following are selectively identified areas of the interview where they were explaining with confidence their approaches. In some cases the superintendent was relaxed providing very peaceful accounts of a situation. In others, the opposite occurred. In both types of cases, which perhaps relates to the personalities of individuals, there was an identifiable confidence. The impression provided was that the superintendents felt confident in relating to the interpersonal dynamics of conflict. The following are sections of the interviews wherein the superintendent was providing his "confident approaches."

Sam: A quiet confidence was noted in Sam's interview as he methodically provided an undergirding philosophy as to how he handles conflict.

> I guess no one likes conflict. If there is a conflict that is upsetting to me, but if I am upset about something I try to deal directly with it. That is my way of dealing with it. I would want to go and talk to the people. It may not resolve the conflict but it makes me feel better.

Sam continued:

> I have never sat back and taken satisfaction in [how I handle conflict]. I think it is on going. As a teacher you might be happy in what happened in yesterday's class. It doesn't mean that you can think it is going to carry you for today's class. There are always in dealing with people new challenges, new dynamics that arise. You have to be learning all the time.... I have to take ownership for it too if I am part of it. But I can share the ownership.

In identifying problems, Sam expressed with confidence, this observation about his own style:

> I would say intuition is always right. That is maybe overstating the case. But there is a lot to the intuitive way of doing things.

When Sam was asked if he changes his approach if it seems not to be working. He replied:

> No, [I] just have to work harder at that same model.... I do trust my intuition. I just feel it is the right thing to do. I don't know why I do what I do. It just feels right to do it.

George: Considerable time was spent by George explaining a couple of special education cases. He indicated how appeal to the Board of Education had changed the approach superintendents take with the board. He explained his current circumstance which included working together with trustees in a confident fashion:

> I'll let [the board] know when we are setting up the hearing and so forth. "You may get a call from a parent and so just be aware of that and forewarning them that it is coming their way. They really appreciate that." They say "we don't need to know the details we'll listen to the parents as they come to us, that is part of our role." So in a way the parents have a right to influence where the superintendent is considered to be wrong technically if he in any way tries to influence a board member prior to the expulsion hearing.... I have been around long enough, so I can remember when you certainly discussed things in quite detail.... And some cases the minds of the certain members of the board were pretty much made up by information they had already received before they heard both sides of the story. I think it is working better now. It is certainly a fairer way to a student or to parents who are coming before the board.

This emphasis on being "fair" reflected George's confidence in his relationship with his employing board:

> This has been a very good Board.... There is not a dichotomy between town and county members.... So it makes it much

> easier to function. If you have a quick decision that needs to be made you can call people quickly to make the decision. It allows for a lot of freedom and flexibility.

Joe: A tone was set by Joe creating stability within the system according to his self-report:

> Oh, I think [conflict] is a fact of life. It is just I live with it. And have adapted to it.... I will reinforce things which I feel the [Board of Education] have taken right courses. I will try to encourage them not to take certain others. And I will initiate a lot of things which I think they should be doing and encourage them. And I will argue with them. I will conjole them. But at a certain point the Board makes the decision and I have choice -- I live with that decision, I promulgate it, I work on it, or I get out. ...like some trustees I have had heated debates with them at Board meetings, I don't think it had much to do with me at all. It was the issue.

He also talked about getting the best for the system, namely, "go with the winners, not the whiners."

> I guess the other thing I find distressful is the whiners, I call them. No matter what you do it is never right.... So one should really spend their time dealing with those who you can influence and try to move in a positive direction. I have what I call my 50-50 ratio. I think 25% of your people do 50% of the work. 50% of your people do the other half and there are 25% who don't do much of anything. I think similarly 25% of the people are your real guts of your organization that go and do things. And 25% are always trying to tear away and that 50% that lies in between... that's the one that makes the difference. Depending on which way they go. Choose to model after. If they choose to model affirmatively and positively or go in a negative direction.

Joe confirmed his confidence in the system despite the inevitable conflicts that are ongoing. "And I guess to be very blunt I feel very good about the school district right now.... I think we are really on a forward role." From that confident scenario of facing a positive direction, Joe concluded "You make friends – you make enemies – if you are lucky, when you leave the job, you are still friends with yourself."

Ted: The researcher could feel a sense of confidence in Ted when he outlined "principled negotiation." He felt it was a technique that worked well for him. He gave an example of a group of parents who were trying to get one of his employees fired.

> They were telling me how rotten he was. I told them, I do hope you have your facts straight because I will have to report this conversation to him and I am sure he is going to bring a legal action against you because you are being libelous. These guys were just off the wall. They were off the wall and they were ready to crucify this guy. And there was a lot of emotion and anger and they wanted me to fire him.

He then described how he used his position of superintendent to power the group into dealing with issues rather than personalities. In describing this the researcher gained the impression that this method was one that Ted used with confidence.

> And then I said I will forget this conversation. This meeting is now over. But I would sure like to have a meeting with you tomorrow morning and we will have a cup of coffee and we'll talk about this situation. If you want to make those accusations I will certainly make notes of them and will examine them but I suggest we talk about real instances rather emotional stuff. And again I used principle negotiation with them. I said what do you guys really want? And why do you really want it? What are we trying to get at here? They understood my strategy and I understood where their frustration was coming from and the conflict eased itself away. It didn't erupt into a political conflict situation which is one of the things I try to avoid.

Through establishing a good relationship with these people, he was able to address the issues and bring the conflict to a workable size. The employee still works with the jurisdiction and has worked out well.

He gave another example of a principal who indicated that he did not want his principalship if the proposed budgetary limitations were implemented:

> And he said if you do that I will resign. And my response to him is, "Did I hear you correctly that if we change your staffing ratio you no longer want to be principal of your school." At that point the person stopped and thought about it. And I said, "we do not want you to do that. We would certainly like you to stay, but obviously we cannot stop you from resigning and if you choose to resign you are welcomed to. It will be with regret that we accept it but we will accept it." By doing that in effect I am powering back but in powering back I am trying to show the results of that person's explosion. Usually after that at different times I have said something that I really don't mean before we go any further "why don't you go away and we will meet again tomorrow morning." That person usually changes his mind and says "I have some real arguments why you shouldn't change this but of course I want to be principal of the school." And the conflict is somewhat ended.

Ted also gave an example of confident conflict management when he was in the mediator role. He was very confident in saying that these people should work it out because they owned the problem, not him.

> A situation where two principals were going at each other. They were being destructive to each others organization. And basically the first step was, "guys you are being destructive to both organizations, sit down and work this thing out. And report back to me the solution you have." Then I met with them after they had done that for about once a week for maybe two months. I was a facilitator of those guys solving the problems because they owned the problems. I didn't own the problem. Had their conflict gone to the point of being destructive to the school jurisdiction then I would have owned that problem as

well. It was not at that stage.

Kim: When Kim became a superintendent, she said there were some things that bothered her. She expressed with forthright confidence what she did about it.

> And there are some things that violate my sense of what is right and is really important. We go back to the principalship. There were some things that happened that you dealt with immediately...that were outside the realm of what was acceptable.
>
> She gave an example:
>
> Parents would come to the school with the child and say my child has special needs. "I live in your neighbourhood -- moved into your neighbourhood and my child has special needs." Principals were in the habit of saying -- "oh, your child has special needs -- we don't have a program here." Goodbye kind of thing. Not, you can use the phone, not come and register the child -- that was something that really bothered me.

With confidence, she brought principals around to her way of thinking.

> The principal and I would talk about what happened. "We are a public school system ...this is one of the guidelines we follow in the public school system, and one of the things that needs to happen." I would just confront it. We would just talk about it.
>
> Kim gave another example:
>
> I was out at a school the other day and the principal said, talking about his budget and he is $17,000 over budget, I said, "Let's talk about this deficit." He said, "Not a problem, I have $50,000 in a school account." I said, "Oh, so you are going to transfer $17,000 to cover your decentralized budget." He said, "I shouldn't even talk to you about this... this isn't even something that you should know about." (Laugh) We had a little conflict

> so we talked about how that was important for me to know about that. And we left friends but it was ...something that I needed to know about and I was going to be concerned that he deal with the deficit.

Like Sam, Kim used her intuition as well. The illustration she gave was from the days when she was a principal.

> I was walking by a classroom and I heard a teacher shouting at a kid. And that is something that I wouldn't be comfortable with, but I would deal with it over the long term. And I have never done it before or since. I walked into the classroom. "I need to talk to you." I had her come out and talk to me about what was going on in the classroom. That was what it was -- it was a feeling. There was a lot of things. You know the other thing -- even when you are dealing with it fast you have to treat that person with dignity.

Lue: A situation was described by Lue in which she had to act as a mediator in a dispute between a female teacher and a male principal. Lue gave a detailed account of her approaches in handling this matter. While she expressed reservations about her role, including her concerns about one staff member talking about another staff member without the other party present, she very confidently decided not to yield to the request of a transfer for either.

> At one point I just took the position that I wasn't moving anybody during the year. And that I didn't feel it was in the best interests of either individual. Because had I moved them I would have had to present a rationale for it. I am certain that kind of activity would have got back to the school trustees. Of course they have the right to know about, but it likely would have become a topic at the board conference and I felt these individuals were very worthy but were certainly putting their names at risk and discussing the personal situation and the messy situation at the Board was not in the best interests of either of them.

Lue reflected on her learning from this situation:

> "What can I learn from this?" At that point what came to mind most strongly was when someone comes forward and wants to discuss another staff member the approach I would ...say, "I am glad you have come, if there is a problem, let's get on to solving it, and not keep living it. What I would like to do is to arrange for the two of you to come in so you are sitting side by side so we can deal with it together. You can tell your story and let the other individual tell theirs." And I know that the difficulty in my position is that one has to sort out how much you are obliged in terms of hearing people individually. Because some individuals although they want to report on someone do not have the confidence, it would appear, to do that report in front of the individual. But at the same time, we have to be very conscious of the professional code of ethics....

She confidently concluded that she had done the right thing in the above conflict even though she would handle another similar situation differently. In another instance, Lue tackled a situation that was outside her responsibilities. She illustrated that she has the confident determination to deal with it.

> There was an individual with a drinking problem. A severe drinking problem that I happened to be at a school board function which was during the school day where this individual was quite intoxicated. And so I spoke to his supervisor when I returned....And so I had the individual in and I informed him that sitting by him had almost done me in, and so on, and then I said that I am having you in to tell you what I am putting in writing to your supervisor. It was just such a violation of what we stand for.... I said, "look, I am not... it is not my job to scold you, but I have to tell you that you are not representing the district well and that I am obligated to do something about it because of my commitment to the district's well being. And this is what I am going to do. And get some help. Be good to yourself. Don't let this destroy your life."

Lil: A knowledgeable, confident superintendent was portrayed by Lil as she described a current situation.

> And so I have set a meeting up for Monday and I know part of it is how I set it up. Away from the school in my office. -- I will set the scene with comfortable chairs in a nice circle. I will not set up barriers of desks between me and the person. I will have coffee brought in and I will start off -- I sort of set the stage here for these things. I think that is really important. It is part of diffusing the anger. Talking to people about non consequential things for a little bit -- so we don't start out in an aggressive mode.

She talked about being prepared so that she can remain issue oriented.

> I will think about that before these people come. I will have done my homework. I will have found out all about this particular case and then after that I will be open for the discussion to take place and what solutions can be offered. I haven't got into a situation where there was so much anger that we couldn't talk together. That can sometimes be the case. Now that is where I am a third party and I am not really emotionally involved in this. I am there more as a mediator. Someone who can listen, who is the authority to act. That the people know that I have that authority. And the principal knows it too. I am going to listen and I am going to ask questions, I am going to ask to raise some solutions. So that I am not going to solve all the problems of the world.

Lil went on to illustrate how she handles conflict in day-to-day situations such as those in the central office. She said that her approach in these situations was something that did not come naturally to her.

> And that is something I have had to learn to do because I am by nature a collaborative person and I don't seek conflict. I seek the diplomatic and tactful. I have had to really learn to say, "come in my office and let's sit down" and I find that is another strategy -- sitting down rather than standing up. "Ok. Something is bothering you, what is it?" And I will get what it is, if I can out on the table and then we can talk about it. But I think it is -- people bottle up anger and there is a lot of resentments arise and then it gets harder and harder to deal with it. So I find to be up front -- to confront it. And to say,

what is this problem?

Lil analyzed her own confident manner of handling conflict situations. In the first place, she sees very few situations as a conflict. Second, even when there is a conflict, she does not place herself in a win-lose stance.

> When we talk about conflict and conflict management, I don't see myself in a win-win, win-lose situation. I see myself in a negotiating kind of stance where it is more of a challenge that all my skills, my interpersonal skills to come out with strategies to help us all get to the place.... It is an interpersonal kind of task. The more developed I think our empathy, our caring, and compassion the more insiteful we are.

To help provide further insights into her confident style, Lil gave another illustration of conflict management.

> I have had parents before come to me and say I am going to put my child on home schooling. My answer is, "What is wrong with us." My attitude is, "What are we not doing right?" "What is it that we are not doing?" I always take the attitude they are the customer, in a business sense. It is my job to please them. My job is to satisfy them. I think as a superintendent to find that little grain of compromise or agreement and to fan it into life.... I don't see this as a personal threat to me when somebody is upset about some issue.

Cam: A lot of conflicts have been seen by Cam, particularly at the board level. As noted in a previous section he sees an advantage in this conflict in that it keeps people challenged. He also noted that he has a major role to play in helping board members think though their conflict resolution process.

> ...to see other people's viewpoints. And to understand where the essential differences lie. And then to make a decision. As I

> said to the board, "it is your policy, you can vote whatever way you like, it is your decision. This is what this side is saying, this is what this indicates, these are in my opinion the resulting sequential results. If you do this or you do that." And sometimes they will say, "what will you do?" I am sure they know anyway what I would do. But I do think that if I have any strength in that area at all, it is in presenting in an objective fashion the pros and cons. And having an air of objectivity whether or not I'm objective or not. I may not be, but I can present it in that way.

He did stress one underlying notion in his approaches that keeps him out of conflict situations.

> Everybody has the right to make a mistake. And have the right to suffer the consequences of that mistake and to get over it with help.

Cam continued to explain why principals need this backing, even though they are subject to making mistakes.

> Because the authority of position no longer exists. The fact that you are labelled principal and paid as principal doesn't mean a thing. Thirty years ago when I was a principal it did. Forty years ago when I first started teaching it did. The principal was king. Didn't matter what he said, it was the law whether it was right or wrong. Now the principal can be very careful in decision making and make an appropriate decision but still be at time be very vociferously, or very strongly [attacked], from any side, whether it is the staff, or the board, or the public, or even students. The positional authority is gone. Now authority is based on other factors: on respect, on knowledge, on personality, all these other things. So I think because they are subject to pressure and attacks from all sides, at any time, on any issue. There are some dilly's out there!

Cam explained some of the insecurities of being a superintendent, but indicated why he feels very confident.

> In a larger superintendency your feet are on more solid ground. And yet I feel very confident here. Now, I didn't for the first

> three years.... I didn't know where I was. The only reason that I survived here was the fact that I had a lot of experience before. And that was recognized as an advantage here from every viewpoint. Because I was able to, when a situation arose, I was able to point out this or that, or to give – this is what they do elsewhere. Basically I was accorded a lot of respect from both the public and the staff. And particularly from the staff. Because just as the informal communication network could work against you it worked for me very strongly.

He reaffirmed his feeling of confidence.

> I always feel strong in the face of conflict. I never feel that I am intimidated or really concerned. I am concerned that things should turn out the way I would like them to turn out. But I suppose that is a masculine approach to things in that I feel that I deal from strength.

He explained how he manages himself which in turn helps a negative situation.

> I would come out laughing in that situation. I think having a sense of humour is very important in situations like that to lighten the tone a bit.

It is noteworthy that it was his management techniques which included a fair risk on his part that broke a stalemate.

> We had a very interesting situation here in the last year. One board member sued the board. So if that isn't a beautiful situation of conflict. I will tell you what I did. The suit went forward. So I and the chairman went to see the ASBA lawyer. We determined a strategy as to deal with this law suit. And it was dealt with at the next meeting.... To make a long story short the whole thing was taken to court....
>
> So what I said to the board "this is a situation that no matter who wins, everybody loses. We have to do something about it." Well, we tried and nothing happened. So we went to court and the court case was held over, and the judge declared himself in conflict, and a new judge was to take it.
>
> And so the last thing I did before I left here before Christmas, I took a card.... and I wrote on it to the trustee and

> to the chairman and vice chairman of the board. An individual letter to each of them. And said "I am coming back on the 10th of January and I am going to suggest that we meet in my room with a bottle of scotch and we will see if there is no other way out of this situation than litigation. Would you please be willing to spend an hour on Tuesday afternoon." And I left. I made some comment, win-win, and lose-lose and Christmas. And I left.
>
> And when I came back I didn't know if I was doing the right thing.... On the one hand the board wanted to really crush this trustee and this claim of his and the trustee on the other hand [said he was] not going to give up it doesn't matter how far [he has] to take it.
>
> So we went into my suite, after Christmas, and the bottle of scotch turned out to be a bottle of wine. I offered drinks, I offered coffee, I offered tea, and the four of us sat around. It included the trustee who was launching the case. It included the chairman and vice chairman of the board. And basically what I did ... I lectured all of them. And I said ... no matter what happens here, whoever wins, who really wins? And what has it cost us. What I see as superintendent is you spending public money, thousands of dollars, it is going to cost us three to five thousand dollars. Spending public money on a silly argument among yourselves, that could be resolved with a thousand dollar payment. I see this going on. It makes me annoyed when I have to tell my Math teachers, or my French teachers that they can't have new set of texts this year because the money isn't in the budget. Now that is not why we are collecting taxes. That is not why we are spending educational dollars. And it seems to me that we have to find some route out of this. The cheapest way, is to settle the claim. And I said to the trustee. And he said if the board would pay this and do this, then I would be happy. And I said to the chairman, what do you think of this as chairman? To put a long story short, we agreed.
>
> And we went to the board meeting two days later and said we have reached an agreement, and we know that some of you won't think this is appropriate, but this is how we did it and this why we did it, and this is the outcome. And it was passed unanimously.

Art: Another instance of confidently knowing and living by your own beliefs was illustrated by Art. He expressed his own convictions about the management of situations, either to minimize conflict, or create it if situations were not congruent with those basic beliefs.

> If you are committed to your own administration, the success of your own administration, to the success of your own district, in terms of outcomes for kids, I think you will have conflicts. And that you will have to work your way through them whatever strategies, and I am pretty pragmatic about strategies. And relate them pretty much to circumstance.... Superintendents are going to have the occasional conflict but I don't think they should seek them. I don't think that is wise or productive. I would tell you that I spend a whole bunch more time working through conflict than I do being involved in a direct sense of being one of the parties to a conflict. That's a skill that superintendents have to develop too. I think the old literature referred to it as the diplomatic responsibilities, the statesman's responsibilities for superintendents. I don't think very many people would accuse me as being a statesman, but the fact is that I spend a lot of time being one.

Art explained how he keeps confident in his work. He does that by listening to a large variety of individuals.

> I have folks in education that I rely on for good advice and help and that kind of stuff. Particularly I talk to superintendents from the other major urban centres as well as the director of regional office. I talk to the deputy when we are talking. I talk to a professor at the University. I am just back from the National School Boards Conference down in the states, and for me that is a big listening activity when I go because I can pick up currents from all over the place. Robert Reich, the Harvard Economist; I listened to him for an hour talk about the future of education and the future of the economy and the connection there in the United States. And I know the same stuff that applies there applies somewhat here. I listened to Helmut Scmidt talking about the World economy. I talk to cab drivers who can tell me what is going on in Edmonton, and what is going on in Calgary. I think that the difference.... I would describe myself as being different only in the sense that I probably make use of a broader range of resources than anybody I know. I think everybody has something to say. And you just have to listen to what they are not saying. It is not traditional.... And you do that by listening to the little guys

> and the big guys. Because the big guys tell you where it is going to be and the little guys tell you how far it has gone.

Art continued to talk about change in school systems, reflecting on the continued demands to get "the education responsive to public demand." He indicated his disappointment in the lack of consideration of the long term consequences of some proposals and demonstrated a confident approach toward change.

> The toughest [conflict] occur[s] where major change is involved. It might mean that we don't need superintendents of schools. An effective, productive school system might not need a superintendent. So that is the worst case scenario. But I think instinctively in responding to change people ask themselves, well what will my role be when this evolution is complete. If there is any diminution of power or that kind of thing, then there is almost an automatic resistance to the change. You see I have never cared. I have taught school. I think there will always be a need for teachers. I think I was a pretty good teacher and I am pretty damn confident that I could succeed still in that role and I am prepared to do it if that is what is demanded of me. Being a superintendent is not my idea of absolute total fulfilment. But I think a lot of guys do see it that way.

Art then explained that he keeps himself accountable to all in his system. He is quite prepared to be vulnerable and even lose on issues.

> Nobody would want to be seen as being deficient in any respect. [pause] I am deficient. I lose often. I've got to tell you, I am prepared to lose often. There is an element of truth in that, I suppose. In some cases. I have to tell you that we do a lot of quick and dirty measurement in our system. And I don't want to sound cocky or over confident, but one of the questions that we ask of our staff and of our parents and of the public generally, in three different survey instruments which we apply. The latter we apply every three years. The former two we apply every year. One of the questions is, "Do you have respect for and confidence in the Superintendent of schools?" I don't work consciously to get a high score. I know that I

> could get a higher score by doing things a lot differently. But I have always put that together with a position that I have. That is, in a publicly owned system there are no secrets. My obligation is to be open and honest and forthright in a diplomatic way. There aren't any secrets. There are some things that can't be talked about at a given time but when that time has past they can be talked about. And limit that by saying there are some personnel things that will never be talked about. That is a way of creating teflon that I don't think is used very often but I like to think by nature I am honest and open sometimes to the point of stupidity. My rating on that score always exceeds 95% agreement. That is because I will talk about things. And I will talk about how I feel on a given day.

Tim: Like Sam and Kim, Tim has the confidence to use intuition in apparent conflict situations.

> It is funny, I seem to have a particularly strong sense about people. I can walk into a school and sense... there is a sense [about intuitive feelings]. You know I have been proven wrong as well. I haven't been always right, but my track record is better like a 90-10 or 85-15. It is like the hiring. We have the most beautiful selection list. Everything is wonderfully, scientifically done. In the end it is right here [points to heart]. It tells you. I can sense this. I don't let it rest either. I talk about it.... Quite often people have told me -- you should have told this person such and such. It makes sense in terms of logic to counter that way. But didn't make sense in terms of my own value system. I know a lot of people that counter them with logic that want to destroy you. It doesn't fizz on me.

Tim's philosophical underpinnings were extremely solid. He related an incident in which a parent shouted in his face. He, as a principal, remained calm and cool, and waited for the individual to become rational so the matter at hand could be worked on:

> Anyway, she skipped again. This wonderful young lady. So I don't bluff. I contacted the parent and the parent came in. Now I had to say that your daughter skipped before and I had this arrangement. The parent came in and just shouted at me. Holy gosh. That I didn't advise him the first time. That close from my face. And I am sure the entire staff congregated

> outside the door thinking he was going to kill me. And he shouted and I listened to him very carefully. Totally unmoved by it. Not intimidated by it. But I let him have that distance and shout and scream. I tried the odd time to say to this person ...Mr. so and so... allow me just to make a comment. He didn't stop. He kept rambling. Well, I would say when you are done please listen to me. I would speak very softly. Suddenly the man heard himself. What he had done echoed all over the place. He sat down and became the most reasonable person. And so I did get my message across. And he wrote me a letter of apology and greeted me in the streets later on. But I could have succumbed. I could have said who should take this -- I don't have to take this. That kind of thing. I allow people that kind of space. Goes with my territory.

Tim explained his philosophical approach to conflict management.

> In the school system the superintendent is seen as the boss so therefore what he or she says that goes, or the last word has been spoken. I don't come from that perspective at all. And hence my way of managing conflict is not one -- and I can be wrong too and back up and apologize....I would describe myself not as an aggressive person, assertive -- yes -- but not aggressive.... So I would deal with that in a very professional, calm, reasonable manner. But some of it doesn't help. I realize that. A person may go on and either leave out of anger or sit down. I would make every effort when the meeting is done, or the next day or several days later, depending on the circumstance, I would look that person up and I would make a special effort to make contact with that person. I would not let it go. I refuse to operate with people at a personal level when they ought to be focusing on the issue. Some people choose to operate on a personal level. I will not allow them to destroy the personal relationship. They may not respect my professional judgement. I grant them to disagree with me professionally. But I am not so sure that I would allow them to destroy me as a person or even themselves for that matter. So that has been my style as long as I remember... I accept your anger as genuine, I just happen to be the person at who it is directed right now. I grant you all of that. But I will not in any way further inflame that person. Or escalate the apparent conflict.

He also explained the effect conflict has on him. Once again he maintained that calm, thoughtful, confident approach.

> I do not lose sleep. I simply do not lose sleep over issues like that. They are not life and death situations. I do what I believe is right. I do it with sincerity and I leave it to the observer to judge that. But I like to think I am consistent in what I am saying, what I am preaching, what I am practising. No I can't really think that despite all the discussions we have had with principals, boards and publics, and so on, that I lose a lot of sleep over it. I think about it. But I have also learned that my system is not going to get a heart attack over that. I am not sure that it really increases my arousal level.

Tim explained how he deals with even the most troublesome issues. While he did acknowledge some human concern, he still had that consistent approach of maintaining a relationship.

> I recall the issue of laying people off. Firing people. Yes I have to do that too. And I am really pleased to say to you and I can say that actually without ... right now about ten cases flash through my mind ... all the way from people working with the central office, to principals, to school based people. Yes, there are two levels. On the human level you bet I really feel for you. Married, you have kids, all of that. It really bothers me. But I balance that and I make it really clear that, that person understands but at a professional level and I make absolutely sure I am satisfied that I am making the right decision for the kids for the school or for the system.
>
> The other thing -- and I can't think of an exception where I do literally fire people ... believe it or not, if they are still in the community they are talking to me on the sidewalk. Many of them write to me. I get Christmas cards. Some have even thanked me. Or their spouses for that matter. I think of two cases. I have insured that my human relationship with everyone was not destroyed. And I think that is very important, because we are in a people business. For me to say look it, you are incompetent, you ought not to be in that job. I will counsel, I will sit, and do my best to help you. But the time has come I would also say, I am sorry that you can't remain in that job. And so I balance my inner feelings with the strong belief that, that is the right decision. By golly, you are out of a job, and those kind of human elements of it. They bother me, I think about it and quite often sometimes. But ya, I can think about waking up sometimes, not in a cold sweat or

> so, but waking up a little. But always sort of the human side of it.

I began to wonder during this interview, is this superintendent a real person? His approach is so consistent, without any deviations in his philosophy. So I asked and he replied,

> I often wonder about what makes me tick. I think there is such a self determination.... the odd time it is shaped, then I can talk...about a specific case I would talk philosophically about it with my cohorts. But most of the time I can sort of sort it out myself.... I am a reasonable widely read person in the field of education. Not just my subject area, I might add. And I have said to myself, you know how you develop your own logic ... the big jig saw puzzle ... about my life, about the way I live and all of that ... I have it pretty well straightened around. The odd time a piece jumps out and I have to find a spot again. But I've got a jig saw puzzle reasonably well arranged. And so what I am doing really believing when I espouse a certain educational philosophy or direction that, that in itself is fairly sound. And what motivates me is really the underlying belief that sooner or later people will understand.

He illustrated his philosophy with two examples:

> When people talk about french immersion, for example, and all the language conflict that we have, and then I see french immersion students in High School who no longer talk in a derogatory way about our French Canadian residents. They become far more tolerant as a uni-lingual or some other people. You see, right there, I say to myself, I'd like to see the day when they have graduated from a french immersion program and we get rid of all of this anti-French feeling... I am a long range thinker in many respects.
>
> And I must say ... I wonder when I watch television or read a newspaper that nobody ever takes "no" for an answer. Everybody wants to settle conflicts ... by golly if I don't get my way the principal ...I will go to the minister of education and he will settle that conflict. Even the minister if he supports the school and if there was somebody else to go to, they would go. I find that attitude incorrect. Isn't somebody eventually going to say I've got to look at myself and maybe I am wrong. But they pursue that conflict in a most vigorous

> way. There is a lot of loss of energy. And I simply say as part of my philosophy that there are very few occasions that our discussion with the board surrounding the decision isn't quite in agreement with me. It is not the end of the world. But I would never walk out -- I will discuss, dialogue, present points of view, but when the last resolution is made I live with it. There are two choices to make. Tender my resignation, or implement it. And when I implement it I don't sit here and undermine it. I sit here with the people and ask how can we implement it in the most positive way. I won't even waste my time playing around and playing games. Suggesting that the board made this but it is kind of... I would much rather use my energy to implement it.

The subject of this section has been confident approaches used by superintendents. The next theme, teamwork, illustrates the importance that all superintendents place on teambuilding in their jurisdictions.

THEME FOUR: Teamwork

Introduction

Teamwork was mentioned by each of the superintendents as an approach for constructive conflict management. There was also an element of collaboration in many of the approaches, suggesting that superintendents advocated harmonious, trusting, mutual problem solving climates as the ideal.

Is teamwork a strategy of conflict management? Sam questioned if the words "teamwork" and "strategy" belong together.

> Management, strategies are both from the same paradigm from my view.... The metaphor of leadership has changed.... It is more of a team building metaphor. That's how you have to deal with it. So I guess if you look at what has happened between the U.S.A. and European nations, the cold war, the

> conflict, the war metaphor never did really work. It just kept escalating. But once there was an attempt to work together it changed everything.

Sam suggested that one does not abdicate one's responsibilities even though a collaborative, team building approach is being taken.

> [It] doesn't mean that you can't be direct though. I always think it is good to be direct [and] open. It doesn't mean that you have to pussy foot around. No, but there are times that I am with people that know me well. I'll get into an argument with them. I don't think that is bad.... you don't pussy foot.
>
> A marriage is a collaborative approach but sometimes a good argument doesn't hurt the situation. A little bit of emotionalism too. You can't be devoid of your emotions. So you might see that where there is heated interaction. I guess I try to avoid that. People would not understand that I can get into that kind of interaction without it being a personal thing.

Teamwork using collaboration is important, according to Sam, and there is always room for improvement.

> I think the collaborative approach is used all the time. At least I hope it would. Take the example of a school [modernization project]. We used a collaborative effort. We didn't totally pull that one off because the parents did not have ownership for it. But I think the staff did. The board did. They are very proud of what they did on that project. And the students might take some ownership because we had some input. But the parent group were not in on the action. That created some conflict.

He stressed that even though collaboration takes time, it is important. One has to spend the time to problem solve or end up with problems that take even more time. He gave an example of changing the school year to provide a number of partial days. Unfortunately, other changes occurred at the same time which confused the issue. Perhaps, he reflected, if the changes had been delayed for another year, then there would have been time to involve more people in the process; thus more understanding would occur.

> But I think [taking the time for a collaborative approach] is the only way to go because the other way you pay a bigger price. The school year is an example where there was a superficial attempt at doing it collaboratively but if we were really committed to this then we probably should say -- yes, we do have to hold off for a year [to make the kind of changes we made]. I'm not sure what the reaction would have been of teachers. They might have thought you said you were going to do this -- get on with it. What is the idea of waiting for a year? It still might have been the right thing to do.... To take the time to make sure you are doing it in a collaborative mode. If you aren't you are opening up the possibility of conflict.

Lil suggested that conflict can be a stimulus for people working together.

> Of course [conflict] is a stimulus for progress. You can become too complacent. So in that sense there can be differences of opinion. The conflict I think of a more negative thing. As I think as we talk I see the positive side of conflict which can lead to good solutions and to new and creative measures. What I saw in that school was conflict leading people on to newer relationships, clarifying things, getting stuff out of the way. And because everybody was involved, instead of inhibiting the school, and slowing it down people were acknowledging there was conflict, dealing with it and then getting on. And I thought "what a marvellous way to approach this instead of a protracted kind of battle. They are doing something positive. They are taking it and channelling it. And probably ending up with better relationships as a result of knowing how to resolve the conflict in a meaningful way." So I see that is positive.

According to Sam, a good model for collaboration has been seen in school systems all along.

> I think a good teacher has always been using a collaborative mode. Not just the idea of disseminating information and the students being empty vessels picking it up. They are teachers

> that see the whole student, building relationships and motivating. Making shared meaning in the classroom. Making it an enjoyable place to be. Building a culture. They do all those things that a good leader does.

Joe explained the importance of empowering people with adequate information.

> I don't see myself as a person who sits back as a chief executive officer and lets everything happen and only operate at whatever this highest level is. I believe that I operate at the highest levels within the district right to having my feet and hands in the mud at times. I guess my feeling in that is one I don't give everyone the dirty jobs to do and stay out and always keep my hands clean. I think I have to lead not only by talking but also by doing some things....So I guess along with this you have to look at how you organize and I think the way we are organized is to decentralize those things that are appropriate and to even more clearly centralize those things that are appropriate. For instance, when you get into telecommunications, computer files etc. So I think the power of the person in the future is dependent more on the knowledge and information they have access to rather than the hierarchical position they have within the organization. So I guess my sense is we will get better results when we try to free people rather than trying to control them. And I think in the states, for instance, their whole educational reform is based on a false assumption. That by instituting greater control they will have greater and more productive education.

Lil suggested that there is good information regarding team approaches for superintendents through university course work.

> If I did anything in my whole life that was good for me in my present job it was that degree in human resource management. Because our jobs are all about people. And unless you really come to understand the social, psychological context etc., you are really not going to be really successful in the job because it is so people oriented. It is not really about curriculum, or buildings ... it is about people. And so unless you are going to nurture them, work with them, team build, make them feel part

> of the collaborative effort ... and those are not just cliches... but for me those are what I live. I work on that whole premise of building collaboration, and working with people, nurturing people and building trust.

Support from Office Staff

Kim also saw some advantages of involving others in tough situations, particularly her assistants as team members.

> When I really get stressed is when I have to do this by myself. As soon as I can get out of that way of thinking then I can relax.... I try to get advice.... So its more people in the office.

Lil indicated, particularly in smaller jurisdictions that there is a core of people who act as a team. "They are a phone call away."

> The other way is a network of people, not just women. Superintendents. They have been absolutely marvellous. People that have been there for me when I struggled. When I almost every day there were things. How do I do this? There were maybe half a dozen people out there long experience. People I could trust.... We are there for each other. And there is a group to who you turn.

George also kept close contact with other superintendents for support.

> I find a lot of support among my colleagues in the superintendency.... Within our zone as well my contact with our colleagues around us is as close as the phone. We are in constant contact. You run into a problem. You have some colleagues out there that can pick up the phone and say I have this situation. Here is the problem I am facing. What would you do? Can I draw from you background experience that might help me in this situation. And that's a great support group.

Generally the superintendents, as suggested by Kim, engaged other central office staff to provide support and planning help in conflict situations.

> Ted: We have a formal weekly meeting and we bounce things off each other. It is usually one or the other of our staff.
>
> Sam: I don't like to take my work home. I don't like talking... if I do that with my wife I am just reliving the experience of the day. I don't like doing that. She maybe can tell... that I have something on my mind, but I don't [talk it over with her] ...so I would tend to work with central office staff or other administrators whoever it might be. Board members if it is a board issue.
>
> George: And internally too. We share internally with the central office staff. We just lay out on the table and boy that is sure better than working by yourself.
>
> Tim: I have a really good team in here. If I wanted to talk about something I could talk to anybody in here. Some stuff, of course you can't share. A small little portion you can not share. I run a pretty open thing in here and they come as well and they talk about their frustrations and the give and take.

Art indicated he had some problems getting his staff to operate as a team. He found he had to give the ultimatum.

> If you don't want to play on this team then you are making a career decision. You are making it. I am not making it. I will be the one that acts on it. But I will only act on it if you aren't prepared to play.

School staffs

Tim expressed satisfaction over the collaborative, team working approaches of his system. He feels that this is a good approach to take for changes that are inevitable.

> Yes, in fact [collaborative teams] have been going on for several years now.... Teachers are forever coming in here and meeting, totally on a voluntary basis from all schools. We sit here at

> night and talk about education.
>
> We are currently talking about restructuring.... And nobody really knows what it means including myself at this point. And we have talked about, not to argue, not really to discuss, but to dialogue. We have religiously adhered to dialoguing about with teachers, principals, trustees and so on. It means I will listen to your point of view. I will not argue with your point of view or tell you are wrong but rather will build in a hermeneutical way on your point of view. It is like climbing a ladder. If they can hook into what I am saying and we keep on as we are working toward the truth .. ultimate truth up there ... a mutual respect. It is heart warming to see when somebody says something and nobody is snickering. Or when the superintendent says something -- here we go! (sardonic tone). They respect what you are saying. We call it dialogue.

Kim relayed information about collaborative teamwork which involved the community as well. She questioned moving principals too often as that stability and community trust is a significant element in mediating the impact of change.

> You need stability in schools to bring real significant change about. Some people think you bring change about by moving new people in... and you do need some of that. But I think it really comes when you have a staff that trusts one another and works together and is stable. And I think that eight years is a really arbitrary number. And I don't think conflict builds with some principals. I think some principals just manage it really well and they build up a "slack" ...they build a credibility with the community and they build trust in the community.

Sam said that people who come from differing perspectives offer a real challenge for collaborative approaches.

> The real challenge for the collaborative approach is dealing with the Alberta Teachers' Association [local]. There seems to be many cases where we are coming from two different perspectives on issues. And one would be dealing with people who have to go on long term disability through the employee

> assistance plan. There was a survey done by the local that has been a source of concern. We were attempting to work collaboratively. We feel we do have provisions for people who are experiencing mental/physical problems that need to get out of the situation. The ATA would like to have more of a preventative program. Which is good. [A] place for people to go for counselling before they get to a crisis point. So we have agreed to work collaboratively in that area but ... from the Board perspective; maybe the teachers will want the board to pay for a plan so maybe the teachers should look after their own health needs. Those that aren't taken care of through a health plan.
>
> And there is the problem of communication.... Every case we deal with we cannot communicate to the ATA what we are doing because of the element of confidentiality. And so there are comments made that when someone has an alcohol and drug problem we don't have any way of dealing with it. But we have been dealing with cases like that all along. We just don't advertise it.
>
> So sometimes you can't communicate everything that you would like to. So that is where you have a problem where you would like to work collaboratively but you have barriers of confidentiality and from the ATA point of view there is the professional ethics barrier and that makes it difficult.... That's an example. We are going to pick that one up and make it work.

George gave an example of teamwork in his jurisdiction. He explained:

> In terms of the theory x and theory y I guess I believe most of the time we have some very talented people with lots of really good abilities and if we can free them and release them as much as possible to use those to the fullest -- I have some fantastic leadership from teaching staff from areas of professional development. And this was mentioned to me from the Zone person who takes care of the ATA PD portfolio. Both my deputy and myself attend all of professional development meetings and as exofficio members of the organization. And it used to be that I made all the decisions as to who went to what. In other words they had to apply to me as the superintendent and when I came here that was the process that was in place.
>
> Now we have decentralized all of the funding for PD to

> where school based and the schools make the decisions. They have x number of dollars...just as much as they have ever had throughout the system. We had a lot of battle with that. There was almost a conflict over that because some people felt we were taking away from the conference trips and all over. We said no, in a sense we are asking you to make a judgement. What will make your schools better? If you develop as a professional, what will make your school better. Not, Is this a perk? or, Is this a opportunity for me to have psychological break? a mental health day or whatever you want to call it?
>
> These are times when I should be challenged and I should be bringing back and sharing with my colleagues and implementing some of the things I have learned. If I am going to conferences and bring nothing back and I am putting nothing into practice in my classroom then it is wasted money. Other than having a break from the classroom. That is another example of putting the decision down at the level that is most powerful, most effective.

Principals

Superintendents placed a great deal of importance in having principals as a strong team in their jurisdictions. For example, here are a few excerpts from the interviews.

> George: The 12 principals that we have are very much part of the evaluation system. They have been trained by us.
>
> Lil: So I see that as a collaborative venture. If somebody phones me I will phone the principal.
>
> Lue: So when I became a superintendent, I thought I don't want that kind of relationship. I want to see if I could work "with" these people. I don't want to do things "to" them but I want to do things "with" them to improve schools.
>
> Lue: So we are trying to get better. And who is going to be key, but principals. So I perceived my role to be helping you know what is ahead. Helping you develop strategy to deal with the consequences of what we predict will be the future. And that together we will form a team.

> Kim: I think that if the principal doesn't bring people together and doesn't help people come together and doesn't address those conflict issues and work actively to bring resolution to the conflict, then one group runs it.
>
> Sam: Very difficult being a school administrator nowadays. I don't think it is getting any easier. You are trying to build that collaborative mode. The administrator is somewhat outside of the rest of the staff just by the nature of the role.
>
> Cam: I spent a lot of time [with the principals] encouraging and developing attitudes that allow people to be heard. And for decisions to be made in a sort of democratic way. And I have encouraged, I feel, participation in decision making by everybody affected.... But I frequently say to the principals, you know you have my support, you know you have the board support, so if you feel you should take a strong line in this matter, take it.

George has worked with his principals to create a knowledgeable team for his jurisdiction, despite the shortage of resources that many other jurisdictions have.

> In our school evaluation process and policy we involved... depending on the size of the school, we may in fact involve every one of our principals. Instead of going outside and getting an expert to come in, two or three experts to come in and do a program evaluation for us, we choose something that the Regional Office Phys Ed. consultant, has been instrumental in propagating. There is a person in each school who is the main P.Ed. specialist in that school. That person then goes and evaluates another school of a similar type within the system. Gathers the information and then as a team you come back and you tell what is there and what you saw and then make recommendations as to how you can improve the program delivery in that area. We found the process of doing that is very, very positive and really strengthens the staff members out there in that program and the delivery of it.
>
> Lue also involved her principals in a teamwork process.
>
> The tendency, the habit, the practice, in years prior to being in

> this position, were that principals and superintendents were a "we-they" kind of relationship. For example, when principals came in on a monthly meeting, the area meeting, that the superintendent would chair and host. In general, what those meetings was the superintendent providing information. For the most part it was a pretty top down kind of practice.... So when I became a superintendent, I thought, I don't want that kind of relationship. I want to see if I could work "with" these people. I don't want to do things "to them" but I want to do things "with them" to improve schools. And so I began to develop a strategy as to how I was going to do that. How do you get teamwork instead of the adversarial?...
>
> So it was two movements: consciously building the sense of team and the other was having a focus on the key matters.

This last sentence of Lue's summarizes both of these portrayals of team building and team work. Each of the superintendents demonstrated how they created a sense of belonging to the teams as well as illustrating how a focus on school improvements can occur through the power of the group.

Board of Education

Some of the superintendents referred to their boards as teams. While such a team is quite different from a team of principals, nevertheless there were some elements such as shared purposes, common goals, and positive relationships that would be common to well-functioning teams. As such, the superintendent could work in a comfortable environment that gave him the backing required to be a confident leader. For example, George described how he can "trust" his board to make decisions without undue coaching on his part. "Its a strong and positive group, mostly men, an outstanding group that work together very positively."

Lil also recognized this bond of trust with her board allows her to feel like a member of a team effort.

> I have only been there 5 1/2 years and I have only once or twice not had the board reach consensus on something. There is a give and take that I find surprising in a corporate body. They are not on a soap box, a hobby horse, on an individual -- a collective wisdom. They may disagree in their discussions and they may have quite spirited discussions. But when it comes down to it they will say I have no problem going along with everybody on this one.

Other agencies

All superintendents referred to the importance of other agencies, such as the health unit and social services, in working together with schools. Here are a two examples of such collaborative approaches.

> Lil: I see the agencies as an extension of what we are doing. It is important to work with them. I think some of the things we are doing collaboratively such as our family liaison worker at the school that is funded by three agencies is just a marvellous, marvellous initiative. And again there could be conflict with three bosses and three agencies. I guess it depends on the three people who are heading it up and how willing they work together.... In terms of all the agencies in the community: health unit, social services, mental health, FCSS, AADAC, they are super people supporting things in the schools. And I guess because of our role as a school with our own little system and hierarchy ... we have it pretty well set up that schools have their own dynamics.... I have been working with the agencies in our town for 25 years... again it is building relationships. Getting to know people. Welcoming them into our schools. And attending their meetings.... Mutual support.
>
> Sam: We appreciate what the health unit staff do. Other people have created a challenge to keep from working together. We have had the closest to a conflict when we invited a guest to speak. We felt obligated. Someone from Alberta Education

> heard this person and he thought it was excellent and the parents wanted it but we didn't want to alienate the health unit because they have done a wonderful job. We want to keep that partnership. So we work at trying to find ways that we can be doing it together and if we couldn't be doing it together then we didn't want to do it at all. That's how important that working relationship is.

Parents

Cam suggested that parent volunteers become better informed of the problems related to schooling.

> We probably have in the schools less than 1000 kids. We probably have 200 volunteers. And that is how we get over that. We co-opt people. And get them involved. And they see there aren't the resources, or they see there are conflicting opinions, and they try to work together as a team. That co-opting of volunteers and the establishment of parent councils ... long before the school act required it in 1982. And both have been very successful ventures.

Lil described an experience unlike those described by any of the other superintendents. Coming from a small separate system, she saw the results of a team of all partners coming together.

> Parents, parish, students, staff, trustees, administration. And what was nice about this building of the mission statement, it came from two trustees who went to a workshop in the religious side of our schooling, and came back and said we are really excited about the way we developed a mission statement and the strategies and so forth. We would like to do this. And we began the process that took almost a year. And it was in that shared understanding that I think it really brought us together. We seemed to become less the board, the superintendent. We were people together.... And I am convinced that it is that underlying religious ethos has a lot to do with that. Not that we are perfect by any means, but there is more of a willingness to look each other as a whole person, a whole human person.

This section has been focused on teamwork. As was noted at the beginning of the section, constructive approaches for conflict management included use of teams.

THEME FIVE: Communication

During the interviews, superintendents referred to communication as being an essential element of conflict approaches.

Barriers to Communication

Gibson(1986) provided a number of roadblocks including ordering, ignoring, sarcastic remarks, moralizing, advising, judging, praising, analyzing, reassuring, questioning, diverting and name-calling. It is assumed that this list was made from a much larger data base than ten interviews. Nevertheless, in the interviews with the superintendents, concerns were expressed about barriers to positive communication. In summary, the following are those that were mentioned:

1) Caught up in your own perceptions.
2) Distorted communication from others quoting superintendent.
3) Hasty decisions.
4) Inability to communicate with unstable people.
5) Impatience.
6) Over-reacting because of inaccurate assumptions
7) Providing insufficient evidence of response.

8) Using a challenging, confrontational style.

9) Carrying on debate too long.

10) Handling personal attacks.

Following is how the superintendents illustrated these roadblocks.

Being caught up in your own perspective was illustrated by Sam:

> There are always two sides to every story. We get so caught up in our own perspective sometimes that we think, well, that is the way it is. Like with this school year, there was a stage that I was somewhat upset. What are they making a fuss about here? What a good deal everyone got! But then in listening to one or two teachers working it out – calculating -- yes, they are spending significantly more time working with students.

Sam also mentioned that Superintendents can be quoted because of their position. This in turn sabotages efforts to work collaboratively with teachers.

> There are people that have their receptors out just waiting to hear. Really what you have done is make a statement, "Maybe in this case maybe we shouldn't have any staff development. We should leave it up the staff." If I said that in a staff meeting it would be turned around. I guess I saw it in the minutes of a staff meeting that there will not be any more staff development. There is an example of a communication process... you are always dealing with situations where you have people that want to read something into what you have said that isn't there.

The lack of time to communicate clearly, or listen directly to individuals affected by decisions inhibits good communication:

> Joe: I think we can get into a very tight situation.... The more time you can take to investigate all the facts and to get a sense of the situation is better. But often you don't have the time. And secondly, you don't really have the information. Because

> what you get is interpretations from other people so if the interpretations and the information you get is incomplete or inaccurate you can make a very foolish mistake.

> Sam: I have more demands on my time. More meetings with building projects, Alberta Education meetings, more phone calls, more paper, more things that make it difficult to be as close to where the action is so to speak. That is a barrier [to good communication].

Emotionally unstable people who can not be reasoned with are another barrier to ideal communication.

> Sam: The one type of conflict that you can't resolve is if you have someone that is emotionally unstable. There really isn't much you can do no matter what you say or do. They are determined they are not going to change their view.

Impatience is an element that Joe attributed to his lack of successes in communicating.

> I guess we would all like to be a little bit more patient. Patience is not my strongest suit. But the more we listen the more we hear the better off we are.

Sometimes we over-react to a situation, taking ownership, which often lets the problem go beyond what a parent wanted. Kim gave a detailed account of a situation that could have stayed within the school if there had been better communication.

> The parent was angry with the teacher and wanted something done about this teacher and the problems she was having in the class. It had escalated to the point where it had gone to us. The teacher had an Alberta Teachers Association person there. And the principal was there, the teacher was there and the parent was there, and I was there.... She and the teacher were able to agree on some things that the teacher could do. The teacher apologized for some of the things that had happened. And ... she and the teacher were able to agree on some of the

> things that they could address. And the principal was going to get out of it and I wasn't going to have to do an observation of the teacher or anything.

Some of these problems, according to Kim, could have been prevented if there had been overt evidence of action taken. By not showing that something was being done, the parent felt that she had not been heard.

> But you see that one of the things after that situation that the principal and I talked about was you've got to show those parents. That parent has got to see something happening. Some of these things are really visible things.

Lue suggested that often parents are afraid of the system. Thus they believe they have to over-react to be heard.

> A lot of times people are just so fearful of a system that they won't be heard that their anxiety escalates. If you can get the anxiety down you can often times get a more rational reaction.

Lue also provided an example of a school principal who had a style in an administrative meeting that was a barrier to her attempts at communicating well within a collaborative framework. The individual was using a challenging, confrontational style.

> And at first I felt all kinds of things; from surprise, and confusion. What is this reaction? Where is this coming from?

> Anger and hostility are also barriers to communication.

> Lil: And so when people get into these situations, the temperatures rise, anger takes over and hostility ... people aren't going to listen to each other ... especially with the parent and a principal.

> Ted: People will come to me with emotion but I will try not to respond with emotion.... this time I did respond with emotion. So confrontation is there, no question about it. We've got to

> stop. We are hurting the system. We are hurting each other.

There was acknowledgement that healthy debate can be an effective information gathering technique. Unfortunately, according to Art, the debate can be carried too far by some individuals.

> Now there is a downside for them too if they continue the conflict beyond the point where the decision is made, and the requirement to buy in exists, then that is a down side. But that doesn't happen very often.

Finally, personal attacks are also a barrier to good communication.

> Art: My colleague and I in the separate system have lots of conflicts, we really do, and some of them are very serious. But we have a rule between us that no matter what, it doesn't get personal.

> Cam: Conflict, it seems to me, hardly ever depends upon the information, or the facts of the situation. It nearly always arises from personality. It seems to me that the most difficult thing is when you have personality conflicts and when you have to try to get people to understand the next step. Not necessarily their views but the people themselves. And that is what we are constantly battling at the board level.... So you try to show them that they are doing that and you are also try to show them that their perception of the personality is not necessarily appropriate.... nobody behaves in that way all the time. Everybody makes rational and irrational decisions.

Communication Betterment

Gibson(1986) also provided techniques that enhance communication: careful listening, paraphrasing, silence, stating feelings, and allowing others to own solutions (p.60). Superintendents provided many illustrations of approaches that opened up lines of communication:

1) Building relationships

2) Sharing perspectives
3) Building trust through sharing information.
4) Listening carefully.
5) Communicating openly.
6) Meeting face to face.
7) Empathizing with parties facing conflicts.
8) Taking time to form common objectives.
9) Depersonalizing issues.
10) Removing barriers to resolving problems.
11) Articulating clearly.
12) Solving problems creatively.
13) Networking with peers.
14) Opening mind to new ideas.

Again, in their own words, the superintendents illustrated these enhancers for positive communication. Building relationships were viewed as important to Sam.

> If you have the communication, where you work on the relationship building, that will go a long way dealing with the conflict.... If you don't get to the bottom of it.... we have to get staff members to understand what the Board is dealing with. So we are looking at having a number of meetings with school staffs to share information, do some brain storming and get everyone working together.

According to Sam, sharing perspectives is an important step in the communication process.

> Conflict seems to come when there is a problem of communication or understanding what is at stake. What people are attempting to achieve. So often through opening the lines of communication and sharing perspectives you are able to deal with conflict.... When there is conflict it is usually coming from a different perspective. Not having the same pool of information.

Building trust through sharing information is part of the overall approach in improving communication.

> I would say in my relationship with board members... trust and open communication and confidence building is essential. I find getting back to the information, if I keep the Board members well informed, and I also try to get a reading where they are coming from and try to understand their perspective and try to develop an approach that is based on a common understanding of what we want to achieve. It goes a long way to preventing conflict from occurring. So that is where I see the importance of communication and sharing information.

Listening carefully according to Kim is a vital skill.

> Listening, that whole skill of active listening of really trying to tune into people and pick up on what it is they are really talking, reading body language so you know how people are reacting to each other.

Lil concurs:

> I see myself in most of these situations as a facilitator. A listener.... Get people listening to each other. And then trying to bring focus to some resolution of the problem. So in the case of this child we tried a number of strategies and each time I would step back and then I would be told, no, this isn't working and I would come in and listen. Look at the whole situation and suggest another direction to go. So that's been time consuming.

Sam said that as a superintendent "You have to listen to people -- sometimes you have to put up with their anger until they get settled down."

> Sometimes they have a point. Quite often they do. Then you have to say how can you deal with that. How can you make a parent feel that you are willing to listen and do something? So then it gets back with communication. You have to be working with the people that are involved in whatever the parent is upset over and try to get them to communicate but at least try to have them to make some adjustments that are appropriate with what the parent is concerned about.

Being "open", in communicating was viewed as an important technique for better communication.

> Lil:I think one of the things that I have certainly really advocated and I think tried to exemplify is openness. I tell the board as much as I can about how things are going... I will tell them the good and the bad. Not just the good.
>
> George: In several public meetings and in that school where the new reporting system, the new report card which is beautifully in line with all the curriculum and objectives and the parent would stand up and say this is stupid. I know what my child is doing. If you put a percentage mark on there and give me the percentage average for the class you don't need to give me these 16 items for the things in Language arts that we are teaching this child. I don't care about that. But after they have done this for awhile then certainly the majority of parents in the meeting would say, "hey, we like this." It tells me an awful lot more about what my child is doing than a percentage from what I received in my own schooling back then.... I always make myself available to be there in support of the staff and to answer questions.
>
> Joe: For instance I try to take the opportunity to meet with people of our parent advisory committees which we have in all of our schools; three times already this year and I'll have another one next month. So to give the opportunity for me to speak to them to give them a chance to give feedback to me and to the district and to have lines of communication.
>
> Ted: We try to communicate as much as possible what the real facts are. I write a monthly column in the division newsletter. I try to get into schools a fair amount. Often when I walk in I do stupid things like I'll bring donuts or a stupid award to add

> some humour. I make sure I play in the division slow pitch tournament. And I am at the curling things and the picnics and I cook the Christmas dinner for the teachers. And all that sort of stuff. A climate of openness.

Face-to-face meeting was viewed by George as an important technique in resolving conflicts.

> I do not discuss conflict circumstances on the telephone. Even with parents. I will say this is a very volatile circumstance situation. You are very upset. Will you please come and meet with me. Or will you go and meet face to face with the teacher and with the principal. And that is where satisfaction [comes]. I have people call me back and say I really thank you.

Cam referred to empathy combined with integrity and honesty as important ingredients for conflict resolution.

> Cam: You would probably see two things. One, that I would at the same time be listening and hearing and have a relatively, I think I have good empathy with these groups, but at a certain point taking a stand. Even if it is an unpopular one. Because I hope in those things that I basically have integrity and honesty and I think when you are meeting with a delegation in a conflict situation they are not happy with the status of things. It would be fairly directive. I don't like doing that, but I think in the long run that's fair for everyone.

Ted felt it was worth the time to find common objectives between disputing parties.

> When you are in one of those conflicts there are no rights or wrongs. There are just two different view points. If you are looking at managing that conflict and coming to some solution, you probably will have to deal with it over a fairly lengthy period of time.... And so we facilitated conversations between the two and looked for objectives that both share.

Lue gave an illustration of the importance of asking what a person wants.

> I think my single most useful strategy and I am glad you asked the question, because it reminded me, is "what would you like done?" Tell me what you are hoping I will do. I find this more often than not almost humorous because listening to the parent complaint you would think the least they would want the teacher terminated, or shot. Just so much anger and determination to get action. And then when you listen and be attentive and show interest the anxiety reduces, they come down, and you ask the question, "Well do you think you could get the principal to talk to the teacher about it?"

A technique described by Kim could be labelled "depersonalization." She described a situation where it helped keep issues in perspective by not taking the attacks personally.

> There is a whole area of conflict that I haven't even talked about. The whole area when we go out to a community when we tell them we are not building a school in their area and we are going to have to bus their kids. You really have to depersonalize that one... you get called all sorts of names(laugh) you really have to say, "these people are concerned about their kids. It is an issue for them. I happen to be the person that is standing here bringing them the bad news."

Tim illustrated how he gets disputing parties to focus on the issues while at the same time making sure they do not attack each other.

> In a position of mediating a parent conflict between people, staff, other members, in an office setting. I would make sure that we focus on the issue. I would make sure that people do not insult themselves at the personal level. I would ensure that they listen to each other. That they really understand what the person is saying. But I would also ensure that they say what they have to say. That they do not harbour thoughts that they wish they had said. Its got to come out in some way. Put it on the table and I would even resort to calming people down, allowing this person over here to speak, you will get your turn. Making really sure that they are listening to each other, talk to one another and talk to one another and focus on the issue.

Examples were given by the superintendents keeping the problem where it belongs.

> Lil: I also try to get people to solve their own problems because when I first became the superintendent I really felt that I had, as a leader, to have all the answers. And I quickly realized that I do not have all the answers. I may have some strategies to help.... By placing emphasis on what the problem is, and how can we collectively work, then very often we resolve the problem.

> Lue: And remaining objective, not getting emotionally into it, but reminding oneself that because one person is questioning doesn't mean that you are unworthy or whatever.... And if you begin to feel intimidated; and I started to feel that way. I knew if I continued feeling that way, I would probably start operating in a way consistent with that. And so I wanted to nip that in the bud. And so then I guess what I did ...I took as an example, what if it was this other principal who started behaving that way, what would you do? And I found all this compassion in me about why.

Articulating clearly was stated as a significant component of positive communication.

> Cam: The ability to articulate quickly and clearly is very important. That you are not lost for words or unable to explain your views. Or somebody else's views.

> Art: I set a high value on people who think things through, who can express themselves clearly in terms of their position. Whether I agree with the position or not, isn't the relevant thing. And who have the confidence to take and advocate a position. Those people get a preference in promotion whether I agree with them and the decision falls their way or not isn't what is relevant. Their ability to perform in a conflict situation is important to me.

> Lil: (clear articulation of roles) So what we have done in the last five years since I have been there has been to put in some system strategies to deal with problem situations amongst other things. Knowing: having the board know its role as governance and legislation and having the administration do the administrative things on behalf of the board. And trying to

> sort out the route that problems go. The communication way that it should go.

Finally, keeping an open mind was seen by Tim as a significant element for dialogue.

> I know some people who totally disagree with me. I also have a lot of patience... Yes, Indeed. And I can live quite harmoniously with people who differ. Quite obviously you don't have 100% followers. I might add that in here (central office) they all follow in a genuine way. Translating all of that to the classroom, to the teachers, there is bound to be a certain percentage not to be in the same frequency with you. So I do a lot of talking and I see a lot of elements of what I am talking about are already there. I would say you were telling me this but I see exactly the opposite in your classroom. That you do care. Quite often it is a question of language too.

The following discussion by Tim illustrated ways of opening up communication.

> A teacher wrote me a letter one time appealing to me the principal's decision about the deployment of that person. I thought the principal did a marvellous job.... So I met with the principal and this teacher. Listened to them carefully. And I was very up front about it. I upheld the principal. This person just stormed out and was angry at me.... And the principal was just in his first year. He felt embarrassed for her. I said, "Why would you apologize? You didn't do anything wrong...." Anyway I said, "just let it cool down. She has to change. You are asking her to change for the fall. Why shouldn't she be upset? Natural."
>
> But a day or two later I had to be at that school again. I went to the staff room they were all sitting around drinking coffee. And there she was and I could just see how she kind of wanted to ignore me. It so happens there was a chair or seat around her but there were other chairs. Guess which chair I chose? I went right over there and sat beside her and said good morning. She was hell-bound not to talk to me. I didn't allow her that. I did not give her that space. Not insult her but simply say something. Not trivial stuff either. Something about her field trip. How was your field trip? "Fine." I could

> feel the stiffness. But that's enough for today. Two or three days later I went to the school again. Came down the hall and said, "Good morning" and mentioned her name, and still semi-stiff.
>
> I did that once or twice more.... How can I be in this job if I allow that to happen. Sooner or later none of the teachers will speak to me.

This section has viewed the roadblocks and enhancers of communication. All superintendents viewed communication as an important approach to assist in avoiding misperceptions. Illustrations were given that demonstrated communication as an important conflict management skill.

THEME SIX: Care

Nurturing relationship building along with an ethic of caring, is often the subject of gender research. Sergiovanni(1992) indicated "building covenantal communities, practising empowerment and collegiality ...[is] gaining in acceptance among male and female administrators alike."(p.138) Kim said that she has been told that she confronts conflict quicker than male colleagues. However, Sam and Ted said they confronted issues too. Certainly, Tim, Sam, George, Lue, Lil, and Kim appeared to be caring, sensitive, collegial, collaborative, student learning focused, committed, value sensitive and nurturing. Ted, Cam, Art, and Joe were not far behind.

> Lue: I think there are males that are moving more into the realm of more of that nurturing. And I am going to say also I think that is coming with some shift in our society. This male I am referring to is also in a superintendent level position, a

> father of young children ... he's nurturing outside of his school life as well as in. And so I think he is quite nurturing as well. And I have to also say that I have known some women who are not very comfortable with nurturing. So it is not a 100% one way or the other.

Somewhat in contrast, Ted said that he does "care", but,

> I see an awful lot of superintendents who are definitely not care-givers. Nice people. They do not see themselves as care-givers. They don't want to see themselves as care-givers and they will never be a care-giver.

All superintendents demonstrated a fair degree of "care and nurturing" in contrast to Ted's statement. One can surmise that it may be that superintendents really care and that they care for others but they would not label themselves as care-givers. Here are some examples of comments on the subject.

> George: I say, although some of the teachers might not believe that I am here as their servant because I am not there[in the schools] every day and they would like to see me more in schools and see us in central office spending a lot more time around them and with them and so forth. But number one, the client is the child... in terms of the servant-leader, if you want to put it that way.
>
> Ted: I very much identify with my organization. You hear me talking about "my" jurisdiction. I consider the teachers "my" teachers. I really do care about the folks in that organization. I really do care about that organization. Not that I am married to it for the rest of my life.... If it becomes dysfunctional I really do care about that. I don't know if I see myself as a care giver although I will often direct people to people that can give care better than I can. There are a few people who seek me out as a counsellor, informal counsellor.
>
> Kim: The situation with the principal and the parent. The principal had to leave that situation feeling valued as a person. Feeling like his dignity was intact. You can't... with that

teacher. I wasn't going to let that parent destroy that teacher. That is why I didn't want that teacher there...cause I was concerned.

Lue: I much enjoy harmony, and don't enjoy disharmony. And when you see that people are hurting, and that a situation isn't healthy and particularly when you have some responsibility for it, then one must become involved. And there is the caring element.... And I also think it is another reason why it is important that one takes good care of oneself too in terms of maintaining wellness. Because it is hard to give the amount that is needed in that position unless you have a healthy constitution yourself.

Cam: I do see myself as being very much in a helping role to people who are having problems. Whether they be parents or kids or board members or staff. Particularly staff.

Art: And so I fret and fume about unfed kids. And I do that publicly. I don't like kids being abandoned in the non traditional family organizations that is so evident everyday now. But while I rail against how things are, I admit we have to do excessive things. We have feeding programs in our schools. We experimented with pre and post school care. We have counsellors in every school.

Art: Teachers become alcoholics, some of them abuse drugs, they are not such good managers of money as the banks would have themselves believe. We instituted, a long time ago now, an employee assistance program. And frankly in terms of conflict I don't think I thought of it in terms of conflict, a lot of personnel conflict arises not out -- we always take it back to performance, but poor performances often arise -- not out of will or anything, lack of will, or lack of commitment they arise out of marital stress, alcoholism, debt. Those things end up in that bottom line nose to nose tough confrontational stuff that wrenched somebodies gut. But we instituted an EAP[Employee Assistance Program] program a few years ago on a co-operative community model with college, separate school board, public school board, the hospital board and one of our major employers. We literally fund an assistance program. And I can tell you that, that has managed a whole bunch of conflict for me.

> Lil: The notion of winning and losing and I don't think that is what it is about. It is an interpersonal kind of task. The more developed I think our empathy, our caring, and compassion the more insightful we are.

Summary: These examples of concern about care illustrated the sensitive nature of the superintendents. While Ted said that many of the superintendents were not care-givers, certainly the ten people interviewed, along with the additional three pilot interviewees provided a picture of administrators who were interested and dedicated to the "care" that was their responsibility.

This chapter has provided the themes that emerged, data and observations. It began with a description of the types of conflict that superintendents experienced. The emotional aspects of the conflicts were provided next. Confident approaches the superintendents used in conflict situations was the third theme. Next the roadblocks and enhancers of communication were described. The chapter concluded with a description of the care that superintendents show in their professional responsibilities.

The next chapter provides the conclusions of the research. This will be followed by a chapter titled, "Implications for Practice."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

A picture of the ten superintendents' perspectives of conflict and conflict management was obtained through an open-ended question format. Secondary questions were also framed. The findings have been provided in the data chapter utilizing the major themes that emerged. A summary of the findings is provided in this chapter.

The methods section in chapter three outlined the process used for the emergence of themes. These themes emerged primarily from reflection on the data using the methods of symbolic interactionism. As such the researchers understanding of superintendents' perspectives has been provided. One of the superintendents read a draft of this thesis and reported how well this thesis has captured the role of superintendents in dealing with conflict. As reported earlier, five of the superintendents indicated their satisfaction with the interviewing techniques used. They felt they had been given a full opportunity to explain their approaches and understandings.

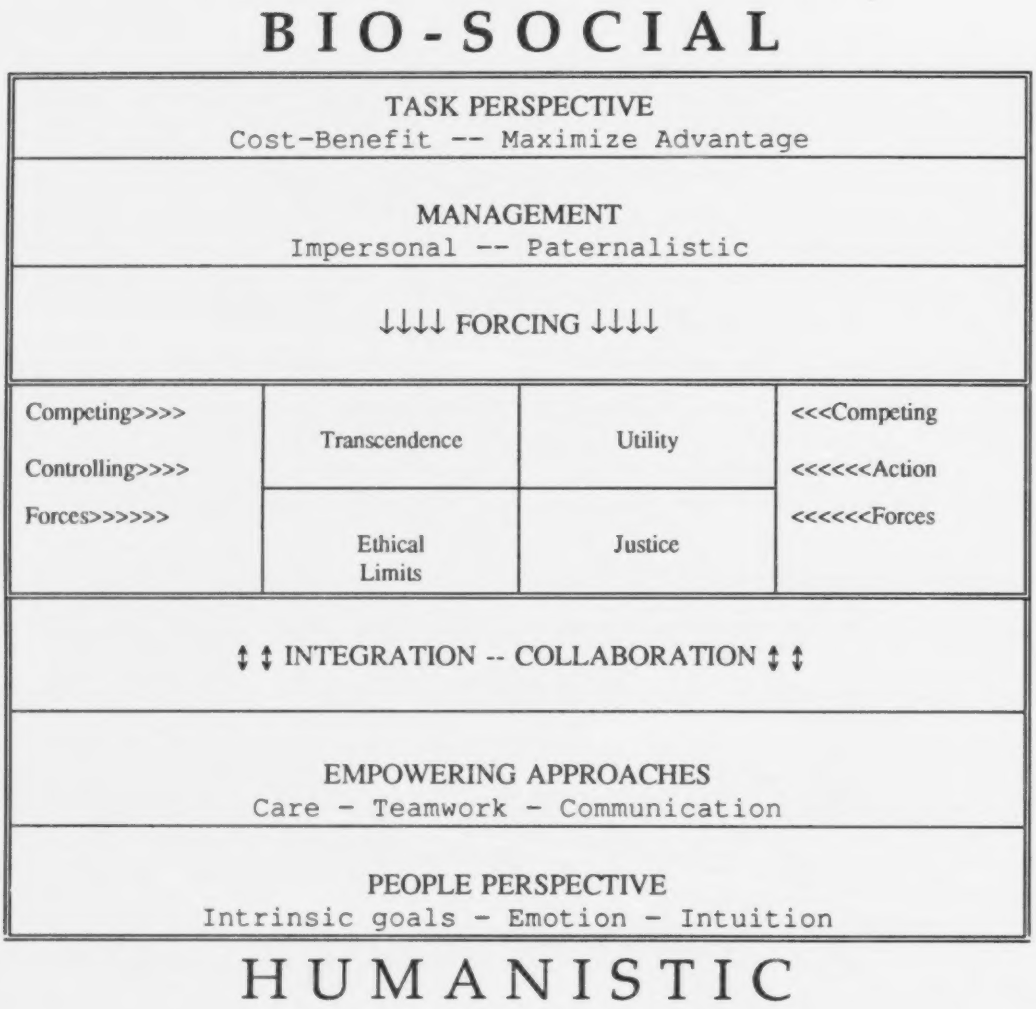
The Conceptual Frameworks as it relates to the Data

Questioning Technique: Patton(1990) provided a framework that was used in framing topics to be discussed with the superintendents(See

Appendix A). Questions were framed that assured that these dimensions were addressed: knowledge, experience, opinion, feeling, and sensory. One could conclude that these topics influenced the themes selected. For example, information was requested about the degree of satisfaction the superintendent had with his conflict management strategies. The theme, confident approaches, used information from this source. Responses to topics eliciting details about emotional reactions, caregiving, and support contributed to the selection of these themes: The emotional element, care, and teamwork. Nevertheless, Patton's questioning technique assisted in understanding the ten superintendents' perspectives.

Dimensions for Decision Making: Sergiovanni(1980) described four dimensions that leaders use in decision making: utility, transcendence, justice and ethical limits. In using these dimensions, the leader is caught between competing action and controlling forces. Figure 3 sets Sergiovanni's dimensions into the context of the literature and data from this research. Throughout the previous chapter we have seen examples of each of these dimensions. To illustrate, from a "utilitarian" point of view, Art indicated central office staff must be members of a collaborative team, or they would have to be replaced. Kim described a situation where it was "us against the world" and she just had to go through the exercise of listening to disgruntled ratepayers even though the decision had already

Figure 3--A Frame of Reference for Handling Conflict



BIO-SOCIAL

TASK PERSPECTIVE
Cost-Benefit -- Maximize Advantage

MANAGEMENT
Impersonal -- Paternalistic

↓↓↓↓ FORCING ↓↓↓↓

Competing>>>> Controlling>>>> Forces>>>>>>	Transcendence	Utility	<<<Competing <<<<<<Action <<<<<<Forces
	Ethical Limits	Justice	

↕ ↕ INTEGRATION -- COLLABORATION ↕ ↕

EMPOWERING APPROACHES
Care - Teamwork - Communication

PEOPLE PERSPECTIVE
Intrinsic goals - Emotion - Intuition

HUMANISTIC

(adapted from Sergiovanni,1980,pp.1-19. Used with author's permission)

been made by her board. Lil felt she was doing the right thing by not keeping some first year teachers.

In terms of "justice", Lil also cautioned that it would be "unjust" to future students, if poor teachers were kept. From a "transcendent" point of view, Tim said that maintaining a relationship, even if a person's contract had to be terminated, was very important. Lue counselled the female teacher who was in conflict with her principal to observe "ethical" behaviour. She also questioned whether or not she should be talking separately to individuals about another person because of the "ethics" of the situation.

Competing Forces: Evidence was provided in the interviews to demonstrate the competing forces. For example in the example cited earlier, Lue felt obligated to meet separately with the protagonists. At the same time she felt morally and ethically obliged to meet with both parties at the same time. In another instance, George may have felt pressure from his own value system to maintain only the best learning situations by moving to dismiss an ineffective teacher. Pressure from peers of the teacher tugged him in other directions. Because of "ethical" requirements he reported that he could not give all of the information to a staff; nor in several special education cases could he "ethically" lobby his board with important information. Thus, there were continually competing forces that entered into the decision-making of the superintendent.

Humanistic Orientation: If there is any biased direction by these superintendents, it is in the area of really caring about the students, the teachers, and the community. In relation to the frame of reference(figure 3), caring would be the basic stance one might assume, that allows the superintendent to reflect, value, commit and achieve intrinsic goals. The term "humanistic" is used to describe this orientation in the frame of reference. That would be in contrast to the "bio-social" descriptor that would cater to self interests, look at the cost-benefits and maximize one's personal advantage.

According to the self-report of each of the ten superintendents, Art and Joe came the closest to operating at the "bio-social" end of the continuum, but that was ten years ago. At that time Art was brought into his jurisdiction to create stability and he did that by telling people what to do. He described himself as a fireman sent in to put out fires.

> The earlier part of my superintendency I didn't manage conflict -- I hammered it. It wasn't so much, "I don't care what you think", it was more, "this is the way I want things to be or to be done." That's the expectation. You will conform or you will be gone.... So if you were to talk to my staff of the day, I think they would say, "he's probably pretty nice, knows a lot about education, knows what he wants, and is prepared to run over anybody to get it."

Joe, recognized also that he had to be forceful in achieving his goals for his jurisdiction.

> I would say that in my first seven or eight years as superintendent I was very much a hands on superintendent. Very controlling. There is a variety of reasons for that. One,

> we had our financial back continually to the wall. We were in deficit after deficit after deficit. I don't think the values here we were living in the organization were quite the values I expounded and believed in. I felt too many decisions were based on what was politically acceptable to those making the decisions rather than was what was the good, appropriate, and just thing.

But both indicated in the interview that their styles have changed a great deal since those days.

> Art: But the literature back in the early 80's began to talk about the big word today, "empowerment." And I knew that I didn't want to continue to be the velvet glove on the iron fist kind of superintendent. So I began to start to shift. And I made a very open and public speech to all of the administrators. We had a lot of work shops and that kind of thing. And I made a public speech to them on that subject and told them that we were going to start to decentralize responsibilities.... I worry a lot about possibilities where things can be a lot better than what they are at the moment. And that is both in terms of outcomes for kids but it is also in terms of outcomes for people out in the organization because I believe that on their worst day they are still entitled to all the support and help you can give them to get the job done -- So they can feel good about themselves.

> Joe: I have changed. I have gone through a tremendous change in my style of administration. And I think I am adaptable to the realities of the situation.... Our culture has changed a lot in last several years. To the point now where I feel much more comfortable with it. The senior admin. staff I have now, who are my prime people to work with, I think, embody much more of that sense of the mission statement. I think decisions are being made more and more on the merit of the issue rather than any predisposition to the situation.
>
> I have a sense we are working far more collaboratively and far more as a team and consequently in all of this I find I don't have a need to have a tight control to the degree I once had.... So I guess along with this you have to look at how you organize and I think the way we are organized is to decentralize those things that are appropriate and to even more clearly centralize those things that are appropriate.... So I guess

> my sense is we will get better results when we try to free people rather than trying to control them. And I think in the states, for instance, their whole educational reform is based on a false assumption. That by instituting greater control they will have greater and more productive education.

Thus even these superintendents who have had a stronger degree of control, have changed to a more "humanistic" approach. Deutsch(1973) was quoted in chapter 2 as saying "co-operation breeds co-operation while competition breeds competition"(p.367). The cooperative environment he described could also be used to label the approaches used by the ten superintendents: "highlighting mutual interests", "enhancement of mutual power", "trusting, friendly attitudes with a positive interest in the other's welfare", "increased sensitivity to common needs", and "open, honest communication ... informing and being informed."

Bercovitch(1984) and Fisher and Ury(1983) indicated that the cooperative approaches with a win-win orientation help individuals recognize the positive sides of conflict as well as enhancing creativity in finding mutually acceptable creative solutions. The superintendents in this study used these approaches in a cooperative environment to achieve constructive directions.

Wirt(1990) also indicated that as stability of the role is achieved, and conflict is at a low ebb, then the superintendent can act as a "professional, delegator, or facilitator"(p.2). The superintendents in this study placed much confidence in their staffs. Empowering approaches of teamwork, collaboration and communication were well illustrated. The personal touch of relationship building and caring about the individual was present. Also superintendents were in touch with their own intuition and personal needs. The shift from the more "bio-social", was exemplified by Art and Joe, who would now see themselves as much more value oriented, collaborative, and "statesmanlike" in their approaches. Power was achieved by people through building relationships. Emphasis was on understanding perspectives and recognizing that people with differing points of view can live side-by-side. Once again, the work of Fisher and Ury(1983) was illustrated in this study.

Summary: In the frame of reference(Figure 3,above), Superintendents were predominately in the "people perspective" area. Although it is recognized that this frame of reference has varying degrees of use of each dimension (ethical limits, utility, transcendence, and justice) the predominant approach to conflict situations can be labelled "humanistic."

Conclusions:

This research focused on one major question:

How do selected Alberta superintendents experience and manage conflict?

Secondary questions were developed to assist in ensuring that a well rounded view of conflict and conflict management was achieved. The findings are presented in the context of those secondary questions.

1. What are the superintendents' perspectives of their experiences with conflict?

The overall conclusion in this research is that the ten superintendents used a "humanistic" approach in adapting to an environment that does from time to time have conflict. They would prefer to have harmony in contrast to conflict. To achieve this they used teambuilding and communication skills. They were prepared to confront conflicts when they arose. But whether in conflict or in the preferred state of harmony, they cared about "their" people.

Some superintendents could remain unruffled in the face of conflict. In fact, one talked about a person shouting in his face, while he calmly waited until the person was done so that the issues could be handled. But others acknowledged that they "hit the ceiling", before they settle down to handle conflict situations rationally. Others tended to use their position to "power" the other party before managing the conflict. Personnel problems, especially if a staff member's contract is not renewed, bothered most superintendents.

Most of the conflicts reported were task-related rather than personnel matters. These would be classified by Likert and Likert(1976) as substantive conflicts as compared to affective. Using Deutsch's(1973) types of conflict, while some conflicts were veridical(accurately perceived but difficult to resolve), most were contingent conflicts (fairly easy to resolve but the resolution was not readily perceived by the parties). Bailey(Lindelow,1971) used the level of intensity of conflicts to classify conflict. Most of the conflicts provided by the superintendents would be second level conflicts. This level involved conflicts such as programming and budgeting. Placement of students, contract continuation, philosophical differences -- these are examples of the second level conflicts that were reported in this study.

2. What values do superintendents hold relating to conflict and conflict management?

Figure 3 has provided a frame of reference for handling conflicts. The superintendents in this study used a humanistic orientation in dealing with conflict situations in contrast to the forcing, task-oriented approach (biosocial). The descriptor "humanistic" is also the label that could be placed on the values of the superintendents. While there was the recognition that there always will be conflict situations, empowering people to handle the conflict was considered important. The superintendents did this by supporting people in conflict, helping them to keep their self esteem intact, while working on collaborative approaches. Teambuilding, communication and intrinsic goal setting were part of the process. Sensitivity, intuition, and a range of emotions including caring were present. While conflicts were depersonalized, focusing primarily on issues, Superintendents supported their staffs using a "people perspective" in their decision-making. Thus the values would be labelled "humanistic" in contrast to "bio-social."

3. What strategies are used in managing conflict?

Predominant themes throughout the interviews were teamwork (including collaboration), communication and care. These represented primarily proactive conflict management strategies. Appendix H provides a description of the various management strategies and approaches from the themes that were reported by the superintendents. To illustrate, the following are four strategies that are included:

> Tim: (Empathic Approach) Then they get angry at me. I am listening alright and I am very much affected about what they say but I also say to myself, "well if I was in their shoes there is good reasons for them to be disappointed."
>
> Cam: (Use Humour) I think having a sense of humour is very important in situations like that to lighten the tone a bit.
>
> Lil: (Confront Anger) People bottle up anger and there is resentments that arise and then it gets harder and harder to deal with it. So I find to be up front; to confront it. And to say, "what is this problem?"
>
> Joe: (Self-talk) You make friends. You make enemies. If you are lucky, when you leave the job, you are still friends with yourself.

In using strategies for conflict management there were some differences in style reported. Tim was very calm with infinite patience in his approaches. On the other hand Joe reported that he "hits the ceiling." Ted used "overpowering" to force his way into principled negotiation. Sam indicated he enjoys a lively debate. Despite these differences, all superintendents placed emphasis on building relationships.

4. What are the outcomes of conflict management?

Conflicts were seldom totally resolved. Instead conflict management techniques were used to deal with the aftermath following the period of escalation. Generally the superintendents were left to reflect and carry through on improved relationships, communications and the building of trust that would assist others to be more charitable in future situations. Sam told us that he wouldn't change his approach if it wasn't working but rather he would try harder to get the collaborative approaches working. Generally as seen in the data presented, there may have been improved situations but, as Lue said,

> It was unsatisfying knowing that half a story was in so many places and that there would be so many people puzzled. And some of them may have been disappointed in my behaviour. But I believed that what I had done was the right thing.

Providing more information for informed decision making was seen as important too. Joe mentioned a similar approach following a strike. He set up communication groups that provided information as a vehicle for trust building. Tim indicated he would step up his efforts to make contact with people who disagreed with him because re-establishing a relationship was important to him. He also referred to the outcomes between board and superintendent disagreements:

> But I would never walk out. I will discuss, dialogue, present

> points of view, but when the last resolution is made I live with it. There are two choices to make. Tender my resignation, or implement it. And when I implement it I don't sit here and undermine it. I sit here with the people and ask how can we implement it in the most positive way. I won't even waste my time playing around and playing games. Suggesting that the board made this but it is kind of... I would much rather use my energy to implement it.

There were some references in the interviews to win-win and win-lose scenarios. Cam dealt with the conflict within the board by indicating that everyone is losing if the matter is not resolved. Lil said she tries to keep out of the gamesmanship of win-lose as she musters her interpersonal skills into a mutual search for alternatives.

> The notion of winning and losing: I don't think that is what it is about. It is an interpersonal kind of task. The more developed I think our empathy, our caring, and compassion the more insightful we are.... I think as a superintendent to find that little grain of compromise or agreement and to fan it into life. Try to reach out and talk to people. I don't see it as a winning or losing.

Ted felt if you are forced to use your authority to win at the expense of another then you did not win, you actually lost. "I won -- he lost -- therefore we both lost." Thus superintendents have developed interpersonal skills that helped them move away from the win-lose mentality to a collaborative approach in dealing with difficult issues and situations.

This could be viewed as the productive side of conflict. The issues have been identified as an outcome of the conflict, and the parties resolved to work on feasible approaches together. Conversely, if conflict is counter-productive to the system then superintendents were prepared to act. Art referred to subordinants playing on his "team" or being dismissed. Ted said, "Had their conflict gone to the point of being destructive to the school jurisdiction then I would have owned that problem as well." And because he would now be part of the conflict with ownership then he would make decisions relating to it. Superintendents acknowledged that this does not happen very often.

On the personal side the superintendents reported a range of emotional outcomes to conflict situations. George indicated that he works on conflict issues mentally as he works around the house or as he tries to sleep. On the other hand, Sam said he tries very hard not to take problems home. If he is bothered about something then he deals with it by confronting the issues. He admitted it may not resolve the matter but at least he feels better. Tim on the other hand remains calm and steady in his resolve that nothing is worth risking a heart attack.

> I simply do not lose sleep over issues like that.... I am not sure that [conflicts] really increases my arousal level.

One of the outcomes of conflict is the need of all superintendents to network with others. None of the superintendents worked in isolation. They all discussed issues with fellow superintendents, board chairpersons, central office staff, university professors, and/or Alberta Education staff. While some issues were recognized as only theirs, generally there were mechanisms for support in place to assist in decision making.

Summary

Through interviewing superintendents who were reporting on one type of social interaction, namely conflict and conflict management, an insight into the day to day world of superintendents has been gained. Themes were developed to assist in the organization of the data. A frame of reference has been developed(figure 3) that reflects the ways that superintendents interpreted and approached conflict situations as portrayed from the data collected.

Observations in this study suggested superintendents are not formally trained in conflict management techniques. One had a bachelors degree in a related field, human resource management, while another had a doctorate in counselling psychology. Most indicated that they have learned workable techniques and attitudes through previous roles as well as through experience on the job, supplemented by reading and workshops. A summary of some of the approaches will be provided in a final chapter, "Implications for Practice." A more formal summary of conflict management techniques is found in Appendix G.

The overall conclusion of this research is that superintendents used a "humanistic" management approach with respect to the conflict they experienced. They used proactive approaches including teambuilding and establishing open communication. They were prepared to confront conflict issues when they arose. But whether in conflict or in the preferred state of harmony, they did "care" about their people, as system members and as individuals.

Ten superintendents who managed themselves well according to their self-reports were interviewed. The outcomes have provided not so much a description of conflict management, as an appreciation for "conflict self management." This would be in keeping with the maxim, "you cannot change another person, you can only change yourself." The picture painted in this study is one of superintendents who kept themselves highly adaptable to a changing culture which included managing themselves and helping others preserve their dignity and self worth in conflict circumstances.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Following the interviews a number of the superintendents expressed their appreciation for having the opportunity to reflect on their practices relating to conflict. They also indicated they appreciated the personal interview and being asked about their personal perspective. One superintendent requested his transcript and reviewed a draft of this dissertation study. He complemented the researcher on the perceptions portrayed in research. In this last chapter, a review of the implications for practice is provided.

There were two inter-related topics in this research: 1) Conflict and 2) Conflict Management. The implications for practice will be provided in the context of these two topics.

Conflict Situations

Introduction: Conflict was described in this research as being present in the ten school superintendents' jurisdictions. Deutsch (1973) indicated that no person is ever going to find a conflict free environment for long(p.9). Kelley(1979) reported that schools have conflict because of their high degree of interdependence. This was confirmed by the ten Superintendents who provided numerous illustrations of conflict.

In some instances conflict was viewed neutrally as something that can be expected, while in other cases it was "gut wrenching" and had to be dealt with immediately. There was recognition that conflict can either stimulate creative problem solving or signal that there is a problem. One of the most difficult situations was the "we-they" mentality that is evident in a contract negotiation period.

The Nature of Conflict: There were a number of sources of conflict described by the ten superintendents. Conflict within oneself was over how to best present oneself both personally and in writing. Limited resources including limited dollars at negotiation time caused conflict. This got worse in a strike situation. Dismissal of staff created an uncomfortable environment also.

There were a number of conflict situations surrounding philosophies relating to teaching elementary language arts and reporting learning progress. Special education placement pitted the boards and superintendents against parents when there were financial implications. Conflicts within boards and superintendent versus a board member were reported less frequently.

The Emotional Element: In terms of practice, there was acknowledgement in the interviews that some conflicts are hard on a person emotionally. According to one superintendent, conflict is "you and me, myself and another person, or a group of people, or a smaller group, or whatever, or a large group, -- right up front I see it very much as a personal issue -- an emotional issue."

The most emotional experiences cited were conflict, or potential conflicts, that involved either dismissing a staff member or not renewing a contract. One superintendent commented, "Yeah, they eat at my gut. I just don't like doing them and I don't think anybody in my position does." Or, as expressed by another superintendent "I do take it home mentally. I can't get away from it. And when I find it is probably on my mind most is during my sleep." In another interview, the superintendent indicated a similar reaction in this instance: "It is also difficult when you have to select someone for a position for a promotion and you have several good applicants and you can only select one."

Even the superintendent with the most experience acknowledged that he has mixed feelings about how he should handle certain situations. "I think your own worries and concerns and your own indecisiveness on issues is the most difficult thing to deal with." He continued, "I am vascilating between the desire to be straight forward, and if necessary brusque, brutally honest, call it what you like, and the desire to get the message across without offending anybody."

Dowd(1991) reported that the American Superintendents he interviewed found conflicts with their Boards to be the most emotionally difficult. However in this research most of the superintendents had positive feelings about their boards. They said there were very few surprises at the board level. One superintendent felt he could only blame himself because he felt he had not provided adequate information to the board.

In another instance, where a single board member started attacking the direction taken by the superintendent, the superintendent lost his composure and appealed to the board to support his actions. Even though he won by getting that support, he said he had lost because the board member lost. Perhaps we could say this is a case of mixed emotions, but he viewed it as a dangerous game in which you only have a certain number of chits. When you throw one out you have one less which may be needed in the future. In terms of an implication for practice: Don't lose your composure in a public board meeting.

Summary: Superintendents can expect to deal with anger as well as less emotionally charged forms of conflict. Thus they need skills to manage themselves and others in conflict circumstances. That is the subject of the next section that provides the implications for practice for conflict management.

Conflict Management

Introduction: Because there is going to be conflict, then the approach one takes is important for the practices of the superintendent. The Thomas(1976) typology indicated management of conflict situations involves forcing, compromising, accommodating, collaborating and avoiding. Follett(1941) observed these three ways of handling conflict: domination, compromise and integration. The interface between the Thomas and Follett typologies with this dissertation lies primarily in Follett's concept of "integration" or Thomas's "collaboration." Integration seeks in a creative way to find solutions that allow each party to achieve its ends (Follett,1941,p.31). Collaboration,"in addition to providing substantive achievements, promotes the satisfaction of personal needs(Thomas,1976,p.910). In terms of implications for practice, the superintendents interviewed focused on a cooperative environment in contrast to the more conflictual atmosphere of competitiveness.

From a Sergiovanni(1980,1992) perspective, the approaches by the superintendents interviewed were primarily "humanistic." This included being caring, sensitive, collegial, and having a student learning focus. If this study is an indication, then the skills necessary for the superintendent could be much more skills of remaining adaptable to diversity rather than "management" per se.

Confident Approaches: Although only one superintendent referred to principled negotiation by name, most of them used the basic tenets of the process. In terms of implications for practice, in order that a person can carry out responsibilities confidently, a thorough knowledge of the processes of "principled negotiation" would be useful. As Fisher and Ury(1983) put it, "the participants should come to see themselves as working side by side, attacking the problem, not each other."(p.11) This process has been used to thaw the cold war, as well as having been used in Mid-east negotiations. It is a method that helps people who get,

> angry, depressed, fearful, hostile, frustrated, and offended...they see the world from their own personal vantage point and they frequently confuse their perceptions with reality.(p.19)

Principled negotiation is an example of the skills that are required by superintendents to keep working in a confident fashion. All superintendents expressed confidence in their ability to deal with conflict situations. As part of the skills in their practice, superintendents were prepared to confront persons when they perceived conflict circumstances. Having the confidence to intuitively pursue potential conflict situations was illustrated by three superintendents. In a confident way they met with the protagonists in an attempt to start a process for them to work more compatibly together. Being well informed was also seen as important. In addition, being a good learner as the superintendent faced "new challenges, new dynamics" provided the opportunities for superintendents to problem solve confidently and creatively.

Having the confidence to know when to intervene was also a skill described by superintendents. And in confident recognition that you can help in some situations, but not in others, "If someone is going to insist on taking it a certain orientation there is nothing that I can do about that." In this regard there is a strong implication for practice confirmed by a number of the other superintendents: Where possible, the ownership for the conflicts should be left with the disputants.

Teamwork: Each of the superintendents mentioned teamwork and collaboration as an important part of their practice. There were twenty four different instances that teamwork and teambuilding was mentioned in the interviews. This suggests the importance of teamwork in their jurisdictions. By having people working together, conflicts may not be prevented, but according to Thomas(1976,p.896) the opportunity is provided to deal with the issues.

Teamwork is "people" not curriculum or buildings. As one superintendent said,

> It is not really about curriculum, or buildings ... it is about people. I work on that whole premise of building collaboration, and working with people, nurturing people and building trust.

Communication: Communication was considered to be another important proactive approach of conflict management and prevention. Effective teams have strong communication skills. In terms of practice, superintendents need to be able to use and model those skills. A list of the skills is in chapter four. The processes of conflict management including principled negotiation, collaboration and mediation, all require strong communication skills. Obviously, it is in the interests of each superintendent to avoid the pitfalls and improve communications where possible.

Care: Superintendents appeared caring, sensitive, collegial, collaborative, student learning focused, committed, value sensitive and nurturing. As one superintendent said, "The more developed I think our empathy, our caring, and compassion the more insightful we are." The implication for practice is that superintendents care.

Implications for Practice: Conclusion

Conflict does exist from time to time in school systems. Superintendents need to accept conflict situations as part of the interdependent nature of schools and school systems. They also need to be able to handle themselves and others in emotionally charged situations. Skills such as principled negotiation are required to handle conflict situations. The skills of teambuilding and communications are part of the tools necessary to empower others to deal with conflict circumstances.

Superintendents did their work in a way that allowed them to maintain relationships. The superintendents tended not to manage conflict with a series of pre-planned overt strategies. Rather, in using their relationship skills, they worked with individuals or groups at a time of conflict. To manage conflict, superintendents must be highly adaptable to a changing educational culture. Further, in conflict circumstances they must manage themselves well while they assist others to preserve their dignity and self worth.

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Appendix A

Topics addressed if the participant does not address them:

Knowledge: What knowledge do you have about handling conflict?

Experience: What experiences do you have in dealing with conflict?
successes? losses? errors?
Are there other persons or agencies with which you have experienced conflict?
How are you made aware of conflict situations?
What is the duration and outcomes?

Opinion: Are you satisfied with your strategies?
Does your gender affect your management of conflict?

Feeling: What kinds of emotional reactions do you have dealing with conflict?
Where do you get advice and support in handling conflict?

Sensory: In your dealing with conflict situations, what would I see if I entered into the situation?

Throughout the interviewing process, reflective listening, paraphrasing, and gentle probing were used.

For example:
Are there some areas that were too sensitive to talk about?
Do I have a full picture of your handling of conflict?
Would you describe yourself as a caregiver -- a nurturer of staff, students & community?
(Questioning technique adapted from Patton,1990,pp.287-295)

APPENDIX B

Sample Introductory letter to Superintendents

Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education,
University of Alberta,
Edmonton, Ab, T6G 2J9,
March 27, 1992.

Name,
Address.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your positive response to the request to participate in my doctoral research involving "Conflict and Conflict Management." I want to assure you that your anonymity will be maintained as required by the ethical requirements of the University. As well, if you request, a copy of your interview transcript will be mailed to you. Any information that you provide can be withdrawn by writing me at the above address or telephoning me at 492-4909 (University) or 934-5291 (Strathmore home).

The study is an interpretive approach that is designed to come to an understanding of the self-report of superintendents of schools in the province of Alberta about conflict and conflict management. Your responses will be recorded and transcribed. You will be asked one main question to start: "When you think of conflict and conflict management, what comes to mind?" An additional group of themes will be discussed if they are not dealt with in the first main question. Brief demographic information will be requested. Should you require more information or wish clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Once again, thank you for your participation. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Kenneth W. McMillan

APPENDIX C

Follow-up "thank you" letter

278 Maple Grove Cres.,
Strathmore, AB.,T1P 1G3,
June 17, 1992.

Inside Address

Dear (Name of Supt.)

It has now been a couple of months since I interviewed you relating to conflict and conflict management. The purpose of this brief letter is to say "thank you" for your openness and frankness on the topic and "thank you" for the tremendous assistance you have given me relating to my dissertation.

In each of the interviews with the 10 superintendents, I received the same open and honest responses. As a result I have considerable data to sift through. In addition, I have been accumulating additional reading materials, particularly for the last chapter, "Implications for Practice." If you have any additional insights into conflict and conflict management I would really appreciate a phone call or a letter. As well, if you have any articles or books on the subject, I would appreciate the suggestions.

Also, if you would like to have a copy of your interview transcript, please do not hesitate to ask. Or, if you are concerned about the usage of any information you gave me, please give me a call. (Univ. 492-4909, Home 934-5291, Fairmont Summer Home 604-345-9553)

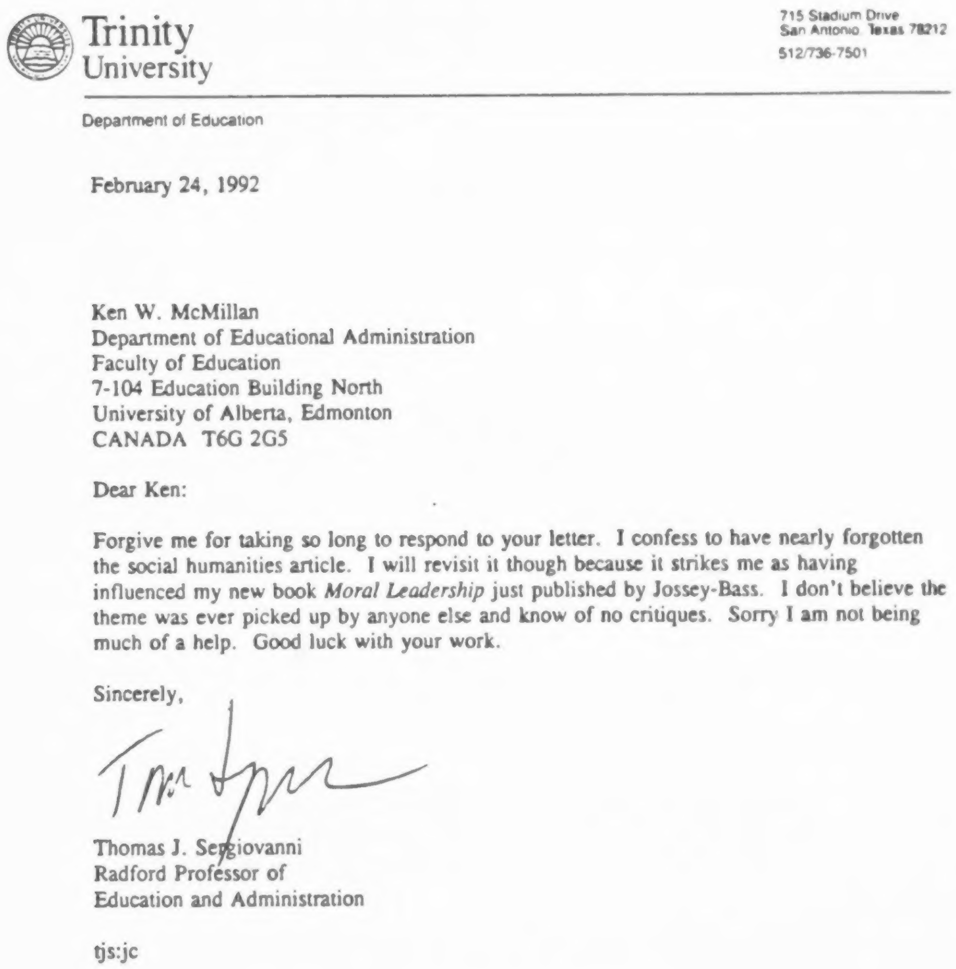
Once again, thank you for your assistance and wishing you a pleasant summer.

Sincerely,

Kenneth W. McMillan.

APPENDIX D

Letter from T. J. Sergiovanni



Trinity
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715 Stadium Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78212
512/736-7501

Department of Education

February 24, 1992

Ken W. McMillan
Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
7-104 Education Building North
University of Alberta, Edmonton
CANADA T6G 2G5

Dear Ken:

Forgive me for taking so long to respond to your letter. I confess to have nearly forgotten the social humanities article. I will revisit it though because it strikes me as having influenced my new book *Moral Leadership* just published by Jossey-Bass. I don't believe the theme was ever picked up by anyone else and know of no critiques. Sorry I am not being much of a help. Good luck with your work.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Sergiovanni
Radford Professor of
Education and Administration

tjs:jc

APPENDIX E

Pilot #1

The following are the ideas generated by analyzing the first pilot interview.

1. Who?
2. Arbitrator/mediator
3. Positive conflict
4. Compromise
5. Process
6. Resolution
7. No-win
8. Lose
9. Deep beliefs
10. Listening
11. Bias
12. Personal attack
13. Professional level
14. False assumptions
15. Avoidance
16. Expertise
17. Loneliness
18. Failure
19. Risk
20. Knowledge
21. Finding out
22. Duration
23. Mentor
24. Emotion
25. Lack of sleep
26. Personal disappointment
27. Agencies
28. Value Issues
29. Trustee disagreement

Pilot #2

The three pilots were analyzed independent of the above list. The list below was generated and then sections of transcripts were placed under the applicable heading using the dual screens of the WP51 Word processing program.

1. Type of conflict
2. Frequency of conflict
3. Resolving issues
4. Positive use of conflict
5. Compromise
6. Mediator role
7. Personalities
8. False assumptions
9. Self analysis
10. Feelings/loneliness/support
11. Agency conflict
12. Knowledge
13. Awareness of conflict
14. Duration
15. Gender
16. Proactive approaches

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLES OF PILOT ANALYSES

TYPE OF CONFLICT:

P1: conflicts between teacher and a principal, or between a parent and a student and perhaps the nature of my personality brings me into a situation where I am frequently in conflict with people. Quite often with trustees or with other central office people or with other professionals at the school level.

P3: Competing interests, might be advanced by two parties, and conflict management might be an attempt to resolve those differences in the best possible manner. Satisfactorily hopefully to all parties concerned. So again conflict of various interests could be philosophies, actions, so on and ultimately the resolution of those.

P3: The most prominent sources of conflict that I have been part of have been seriously related to value issues. What is it that you really believe, and want to act upon, and resolving values is basically an irresolvable situation because there are so deeply felt and held. People are very reluctant to change those things. However I think it is still possible values are still at odds with each other, it is still possible to do the right thing, the good thing, ultimately I think that is what has to happen.

RESOLVING ISSUES:

P1: If we want to talk about where I get into conflict with people...this happens quite frequently in terms of issues that need to be resolved. The most frequently other professionals although occasionally with trustees and the conflicts in most cases would be about issues and only very few cases about personalities.

P2: a collaborative approach and the issues and they are issues for the school jurisdiction come to mind when you mention conflict... A couple that I would mention trying to resolve the reduction of a French Immersion program or the consolidation of it. A very sensitive and very political area for me. Tremendous amount of conflict involved in that. Another issue was the development of an Aids policy and the other one was the development of a new student evaluation policy. That was the first one. And the reason that I mention them is the approach that in have taken in resolving conflict I think that the superintendent feels that I can handle really well because I like to work with a group of people rather than taking an authority position to resolve so I had committees that representative of the community ... I feel comfortable in involving community members students, teachers principals, trustees, and chairing that committee and going through quite a long process of data collection, and argumentation, question, debate, to have a group help me resolve and deal with the conflict of those major issues.

So a person in my position there was a very political potential conflict situation so different board members having different opinions. So I find it useful in the committee meeting to try to get people, like if you have three board representatives or two, you get them with different opinions. Because you might as well get them right out there on the table to start with. So we had three trustees and I think they came form different positions initially -- parents again, trying to use different parent associations and have them decide who the representatives are not hand picked in order to eliminate the conflict because in the end you are going to run into it anyway. You might as well have them pick the people to best represent their interests and then deal with those people at the table.

OK, so it is the whole buy in, the problem or the conflict was there was never was going to be a win-win situation. There was three district schools and three distinct opinions of what should happen to that program. We have at the elementary level, this is just in the one community, we have others in the district, within the one community the program was started around 1980. At that time the enrolment was quite large. It has shrunken considerably. So we were down to needing to reduce. Everyone wanted to maintain the program they had. So it was like a school closure. So not only did the parent groups disagree about what the answer should be initially so did the trustees. So did almost everybody in the community. So the process, the committee process, and working through researched information that was presented to those people, having them work through, present and work through the alternatives that might be possible and having them come to support two alternatives: One, their first choice, and one, that was their second. And so my opinion was in there but my role was more to facilitate the coming to a resolution of that political conflict. And so then committee members, there was a lot of management of that conflict and sometimes needed to take an autocratic position but most times it was just a matter taking a little more time to allow people to have the same basis of information and time to think about it and time to feel they really were a part of the decision and to me the significant part of that was that because we took the time in that process once it got back out into the community I they had to own it -- and they didn't like it -- they were uncomfortable that they had to go back to their representatives and rationalize their decision. I didn't have to do that they had to do that. And that was very hard for them. It really made them appreciate ... "I wouldn't want your job for a million dollars." They were great assistance in doing that and so then in the end their communities accepted that information from them they elected them to be the representatives than they would have ever accepted it from me.

P3: The conflict that actually occurred was in the Board room in an in camera session where at least one of those trustees was literally pounding his fist on the table saying, "God damn it that person has to be gone. There was no way I have had phone calls about this person." I say, "hold on I have been in that classroom enough to rethink ,yes, there are problems.. but beyond that the person is not irredeemable. Deserves another chance." So we have to convince others listened more dispassionately and I guess rationally to the debate. They had not received telephone calls. "Telephone calls" never does say how many, if any. But somebody pushed his button. Somehow. He was reacting to it. But that conflict took place right in an in camera session. There are other numerous personnel issues which did take place too. I granted, for example a leave of absence to a secretary who had been with the district for a long time. And ended up in a serious conflict with this one trustee, and another trustee. And the response from the latter was, "if I ask for a years leave of absence I would never get one. I would be told to leave. Why are you giving it to this girl?" I said "because she is a valuable employee. I don't want to run the risk of losing her. She is too good to miss." "It would never happen to me." I felt that I could really get into it.. by saying I could understand why they would never not [give one to the trustee] – but you can not say those things. So the conflict is over one issue and you become conflicted inside because you can't say what you want to say. So the personnel issues have been primarily the source of conflict for me at the superintendency level.

P3 What happened to the secretary? Initially what happened in that case, is that the secretary turned in a letter of resignation. And it came directed to me since I was the chief executive officer. And I went back out to see her and I asked her, "Are you sure you want to do this?" She asked if there was any other way. I said, "yes, certainly, ask for a leave of absence." So she took her letter back and then asked for a leave. At the board level. It was discussed at an in camera meeting in June. I was specifically told "you had better go out and fix this. Get it done." She shouldn't have the leave. And I was directed by the one trustee that I had to make it very clear to this lady that error was mine in having granted the leave of absence to begin with. So I did. I said to her that I could not grant the leave of absence. She said that is OK. I don't want a leave now anyway. So she ended up staying. She ended up staying. There I was really conflicted because I had done what I believe was right. I had done the granting of the leave with the powers I had been delegated and then I was told in no uncertain terms that I had to change it. The rest of the board did not disagree. They didn't agree either. In that situation that is a loss. So you just play the game.

P3: One of the best ones I had was a teacher who was teaching at a high school. She was continually a thorn. She was prone to emotive outbursts. But a marvellous teacher. She tended to be disruptive in relationships with other staff. Some times treated kids not as well as she could have. I went to see the ASTA lawyer, and talked about the case. it was made quite clear there was not enough documentation. So I talked to the principal and the teacher in an attempt in having some mutual satisfactory working out of whatever these issues were. I basically just told this lady that she was the one that had to make the difference, not me or the principal. It is up to her. She has a tremendous potential for being good, also tremendous potential for being bad. But she is the one that has to choose which of those she wishes to follow. She chose being good and was just a marvellous, marvellous lady. I liked her alot.

POSITIVE USE OF CONFLICT:

P1: Conflict can be healthy and generate additional ideas and I also believe that one of the things that is a real danger in a school system we very seldom are candid enough with each other. And so one of the things that I made an attempt to do to be more candid than I normally would have been and that often creates conflict. But if it can be kept at a professional level rather than allowing it to become a personal issue then I think it can be helpful and constructive rather than a destructive process. An example could be on an occasion where we had a request, more likely a demand, from a principal for additional funding for special education services. And in my opinion the principal was misusing some of the funds that already had been allocated from central office to deal with needs within the school. He had taken the money from the special education department and allocated it to students with learning difficulties but not one that would any way would be classified as a special needs student. And so there was a conflict, a fairly heated debate there on what the purposes were and what our responsibilities were in terms of providing services to those kids who had learning difficulties but were not severe enough to label as special needs child according to the definitions given by the department, for example. I think the intent then is to try to get as many of the facts and the issues out on the table and try to work through those so there is an understanding on both sides of what the issues are. Ah, I think in that case and I think it would be fairly typical the solution that you arrive at is a compromise solution not one that's an either/or sort of solution. That compromise solution has to be based on what's best for the students we are trying to serve but also ones that are fiscally responsible in this particular case.

P2: It reinforces for me that people do not feel comfortable to be able to disagree that there is so much emphasis on agreement, so much emphasis on resolving conflict that we do not always come up with the best answers. And I guess that is kind of personal to me because often times people react to me as if I am being very defensive when I don't agree with the group or what they have to say. And I think that part of my job is to be critical to bring out points that don't necessarily agree with everyone and i get really concerned when a group of people sit together or two or three people and there is agreement and there isn't agreement. So management of agreement to me is more concerned with managing the conflict. I think conflict is good.

COMPROMISE

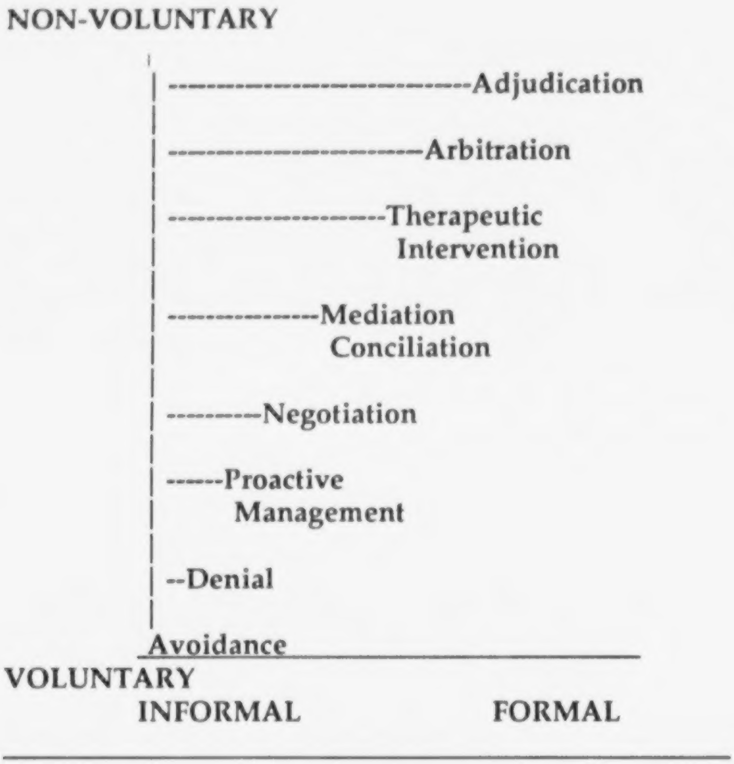
P1: The first thing that we came to agreement on was that we had to provide service to the children that has special needs. And we went back to facts that were almost indisputable. The school act says "provide service." So we established that. Then the question was how are we going to provide the service. Was there going to be additional dollars or where we going to take the resources within the school. And in that case we did provide some extra dollars from the school system. From central office funds, but they also had to reorganize how they provided service in the school. Cause what was happening was there were kinds that were having difficulty in class that were getting special education attention. But my argument was that they should get attention but not come out of the special education budget. So they agreed to do some reorganization to provide service. We also agreed to provide extra services.

P2: The priority should be finding the best answer, the best interests for our students. Often times if consensus reducing conflict is the target, then you get people giving in for political reasons. People agreeing to the resolution that is not perhaps the best resolution. And that is why I really like this committee approach. The team approach should work that way and ours works reasonably well, but, I still think sometimes that it is trickier for a superintendent because of a power position that people attribute to it to be able to manage agreement rather than manage conflict because if they want to get the best possible answer or educational solution to a policy or issue then they've got to have people who feel free to risk and I think to take that to the Superintendent and the principals if the principal still risks that they can speak their piece as to why that is a crappy policy or why that won't work then I think you are going to get a far better answer than you are going to get if they feel that the superintendent will agree with them. I don't really agree. I'll talk it over maybe with him. But now I am going to agree because it is the political thing to do. That destroys what we are trying to do professionally.

P3: Its the basic resolution of some substantive issues that really cause the conflict. That's conflict resolution. Invariably it requires some degree of compromise. Some change. An aspect of negotiation. Most certainly respect for some other one's opinion which you may soundly disagree. But not withstanding that fact that person still does have the right to express that opinion. Unfortunately he who has the most power has the opinion prevail regardless of whether it is right or wrong.

APPENDIX G
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Podlosky's Two Dimensional Model of Conflict Management techniques focuses on the formality and willingness of participants to engage remediation.


NON-VOLUNTARY
Adjudication
Arbitration
Therapeutic Intervention
Mediation Conciliation
Negotiation
Proactive Management
Denial
Avoidance
VOLUNTARY
INFORMAL
FORMAL

There are four broad categories of conflict management.

1. Avoidance
   - non-response or withdrawal, silence, isolation.
   - ineffective unless situation of false conflict.

2. Proactive Management
   - activities that build group commitment, cohesiveness and ownership.
   - group goal setting, philosophy development, team building.
   - participative decision-making and leadership training
   - education

3. Negotiation (Two Party)
    - encouraging discussion between two parties privately.
    - participants voluntarily join in a temporary relationship designed to educate each other about their needs and interests
    - application of problem-solving techniques, if known, or other rational approaches including persuasion and compromise.

    Problem Solving Technique

    a) define conflict
    b) review data
    c) develop a range of alternatives
    d) debate the alternatives
    e) search for solution
    f) weigh alternative solutions
    g) select appropriate solution

4. Use of Third Party

    a) Mediation - is the intervention into a dispute or negotiation by an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision-making power to assist disputing parties involuntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute. (active approach)

    b) Conciliation - stresses the settlement of differences and the appeasing of ill feelings. (passive approach)

    c) Therapeutic Intervention - a form of mediation in which the relationship is repaired, and personal skills for coping and dealing with the problem is improved.

    d) Arbitration - a voluntary process in which people request the assistance of an impartial and neutral their party to make a decision for them. The decision can be advisory or binding.

    e) Adjudication - the last resort among those processes, emphasizes finality and decision and is achieved through legal apparatus (judge or jury)
    - a decision is imposed on the dispute.

-the legitimacy (perceived or otherwise) of third party will enhance the likelihood of reaching an agreement.

-third party is generally effective when conflict is caused by structural factors and communication problems.

(from a draft document of the Alberta Teachers' Association, McMillan & Podlosky, Conflict and Conflict Management: A workshop for teachers, pp.37-38)

APPENDIX H

Conflict Management Approaches

(excluding Teamwork, Communication and Care Themes)

Supt	Strategy	Details
Art	Being positive	Use upside of conflict rather than downside.
Ted	Stimulate Change	"if conflict becomes a catalyst to positive change, conflict can really improve the school jurisdiction."
Ted	Accept conflict	"don't try and stifle conflict. I don't try to make everybody love each other before a situation arises."
Ted	Focus on Positive	"I do mind destructive styles of conflict so I try to focus conflict into the most positive light that I can."
Art	Draw the line if conflict contra-productive Act!	"belief is the absolute bottom line in terms of whether or not people fit into an organization. There is some range in that. There can be and there ought to be a range of belief, but it better not be contra-productive...."
Lil	Use value driven criteria.	"Is this good for kids? I am not here to provide employment for a teacher. I am here to provide the best possible education for these kids."
George	Establish regulations.	"the resolution of [which] is quite clearly outlined in the appeal procedures now within the school act."(for special education placement appeals)
Joe	Emote	"when a real foul up first hits my desk .. I hit the ceiling. But then I fall right back into my chair. Like I can really hit a flash point at times and then it is gone."

Supt	Strategy	Details
Sam	Confront Communicate	"if I am upset about something I try to deal directly with it. That is my way of dealing with it. I would want to go and talk to the people."
Sam	Learn	"There are always -- in dealing with people – there are always new situations, new challenges, new dynamics – that arise -- you have to be learning all the time."
Sam	Accept that you cannot always stop conflicts.	"Sometimes, I really cannot take situations further than I have. If someone is going to insist on taking it a certain orientation there is nothing that I can do about that."
Sam	Use intuition	"I do trust my intuition. I just feel it is the right thing to do -- I don't know why I do what I do -- it just feels right to do it."
Joe	Depersonalize issues	"like some trustees I have had heated debates with them at Board meetings, I don't think it had much to do with me at all. It was the issue.... I guess my role is to try to come up with a consistent direction with a philosophy..."
Joe	Associate with winners	"I guess the other thing I find distressful is the whiners, I call them. No matter what you do it is never right.... 25% of the people are your real guts of your organization that go and do things. And 25% are always trying to tear away and that 50% that lies in between... that's the one that makes the difference. Depending on which way they go. Choose to model after. If they choose to model affirmatively and positively or go on a negative direction."

Supt	Strategy	Details
Joe	Use self-talk	"You make friends -- you make enemies -- if you are lucky, when you leave the job, you are still friends with yourself."
Ted	Use Principle Negotiation Techniques.	Through establishing a good relationship with these people, he was able to address the issues and bring the conflict to a workable size.
Lil	Mediate between parties.	"guys you are being destructive to both organizations, sit down and work this thing out. And report back to me the solution you have. Had their conflict gone to the point of being destructive to the school jurisdiction then I would have owned that problem as well. It was not at that stage."
Ted		"I am a third party and I am not really emotionally involved in this. I am there more as a mediator. Someone who can listen, who is the authority to act. That the people know that I have that authority. And principal knows it too. I am going to listen and I am going to ask questions, I am going to ask to raise some solutions. So that I am not going to solve all the problems of the world."
Kim	Confront Issue	"And so what I would do in those situations is -- the principal and I would talk."
Lue	Be decisive	"At one point I just took the position that I wasn't moving anybody during the year. And that I didn't feel it was in the best interests of either individuals.

Supt	Strategy	Details
Lue	Observe Ethics	"Because some individuals although they want to report on someone do not have the confidence, it would appear, to do that report in front of the individual. But at the same time, we have to be very conscious of the professional code of ethics. And discussing other people with other people is unprofessional...."
Lue	Confront unacceptable behaviours.	"it is not my job to scold you, but I have to tell you that you are not representing the district well and that I am obligated to do something about it because of my commitment to the district's well being."
Lil	Diffuse Anger	"I will set the scene with comfortable chairs in a nice circle. I will not set up barriers of desks between me and the person. I will have coffee brought in and I will start off -- I sort of set the stage here for these things. I think that is really important. It is part of diffusing the anger."
Lil	Be assertive	"I have had to really learn to say, "come in my office and let's sit down" and I find that is another strategy – sitting down rather than standing up. "Ok. Something is bothering you, what is it?" And I will get what it is, if I can out on the table and then we can talk about it. "
Lil	Confront Anger	people bottle up anger and there is a lot of resentments arise and then it gets harder and harder to deal with it. So I find to be up front – to confront it. And to say, what is this problem?

Supt	Strategy	Details
Lil	Use creative problem solving.	"I don't see myself in a win-win, win-lose situation. I see myself in a negotiating kind of stance where it is more of a challenge that all my skills, my interpersonal skills to come out with strategies to help us all get to the place.
Lil	Compromise	"We all win when there is some compromise. I don't see this as a personal threat to me when somebody is upset about some issue. I just can't even think of one in my years that -- there has always been a way that we can sit down and come to some agreement over some part of the issue even if we can not agree[on it all]."
Cam	Clarify Issues	"But I do think that if I have any strength in that area at all, it is in presenting in an objective fashion the pros and cons. And having an air of objectivity whether or not I'm objective or not."
Cam	Support staff even if mistakes are made.	"Everybody has the right to make a mistake. And have the right to suffer the consequences of that mistake and to get over it with help."
Cam	Position of Strength	"I always feel strong in the face of conflict. I never feel that I am intimidated or really concerned. "
Cam	Use humour	"I think having a sense of humour is very important in situations like that to lighten the tone a bit."

Supt	Strategy	Details
Cam	Be prepared to take risks.	"And said I am coming back on the 10th of January and I am going to suggest that we meet in my room with a bottle of scotch and we see if there is no other way out of this situation than litigation...And I said ... no matter what happens here, whoever wins, who really wins? And what has it cost us. What I see as superintendent is you spending public money, thousands of dollars."
Art	Be diplomatic	"I would tell you that I spend a whole bunch more time working through conflict than I do being involved in a direct sense of being one of the parties to a conflict. Part of that – that's a skill that superintendents have to develop too. I think the old literature referred to it as the diplomatic responsibilities, the statesman's responsibilities for superintendents."
Art	Keep an open mind.	"The toughest [conflict] occur[s] where major change is involved. It might mean that we don't need superintendents of schools. An effective, productive school system might not need a superintendent."

Supt	Strategy	Details
Tim	Be patient.	1) "And he shouted and I listened to him very carefully. Totally unmoved by it. Not intimidated by it. But I let him have that distance and shout and scream. I tried the odd time tó say to this person ...Mr. so and so... allow me just to make a comment. He didn't stop .. he kept rambling ... Well I would say when you are done please listen to me. I would speak very softly." 2) You really get the emotions out and people are just wild sometimes. I would not react. As a matter of fact, my style would become quite the opposite. Quite a bit calmer. Not intimidated mind you. But it would become calmer. And I have found that over the years that is one way of soothing the torn nerve endings of those who feel they must settle their argument in a slightly different way.
Tim	Empathize	"Then they get angry at me. I am listening alright and I am very much affected about what they say but I also say to myself – well if I was in their shoes there is good reasons for them to be disappointed."

Supt	Strategy	Details
Tim	Nurture Relationship	"A person may go on and either leave out of anger or sit down. I would make every effort when the meeting is done, or the next day or several days later, depending on the circumstance, I would look that person up and I would make a special effort to make contact with that person. I would not let it go. I refuse to operate with people at a personal level when they ought to be focusing on the issue. Some people choose to operate on a personal level. I will not allow them to destroy the personal relationship."
Tim	Deal with Issue - Depersonalize	"I accept your anger as genuine, I just happen to be the person at who it is directed right now. I grant you all of that. But I will not in any way further inflame that person. Or escalate the apparent conflict."
Tim	Be prepared.	"As I can go into an apparent conflict situation I do a lot of thinking as to how do I begin? What do I say? What if they start crying -- how do I handle that? All of these things I go over -- the whole range of possible emotions that might be on display."
Tim	Use intuition.	"I seem to have a particularly strong sense about people. I can walk into a school and sense... there is a sense [about intuitive feelings]. You know I have been proven wrong as well. I haven't been always right, but my track record is better like a 90-10..85-15 sort of."